

PLUCK AND LUCK

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Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2 50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, November 7, 1893, by Frank Tousey.

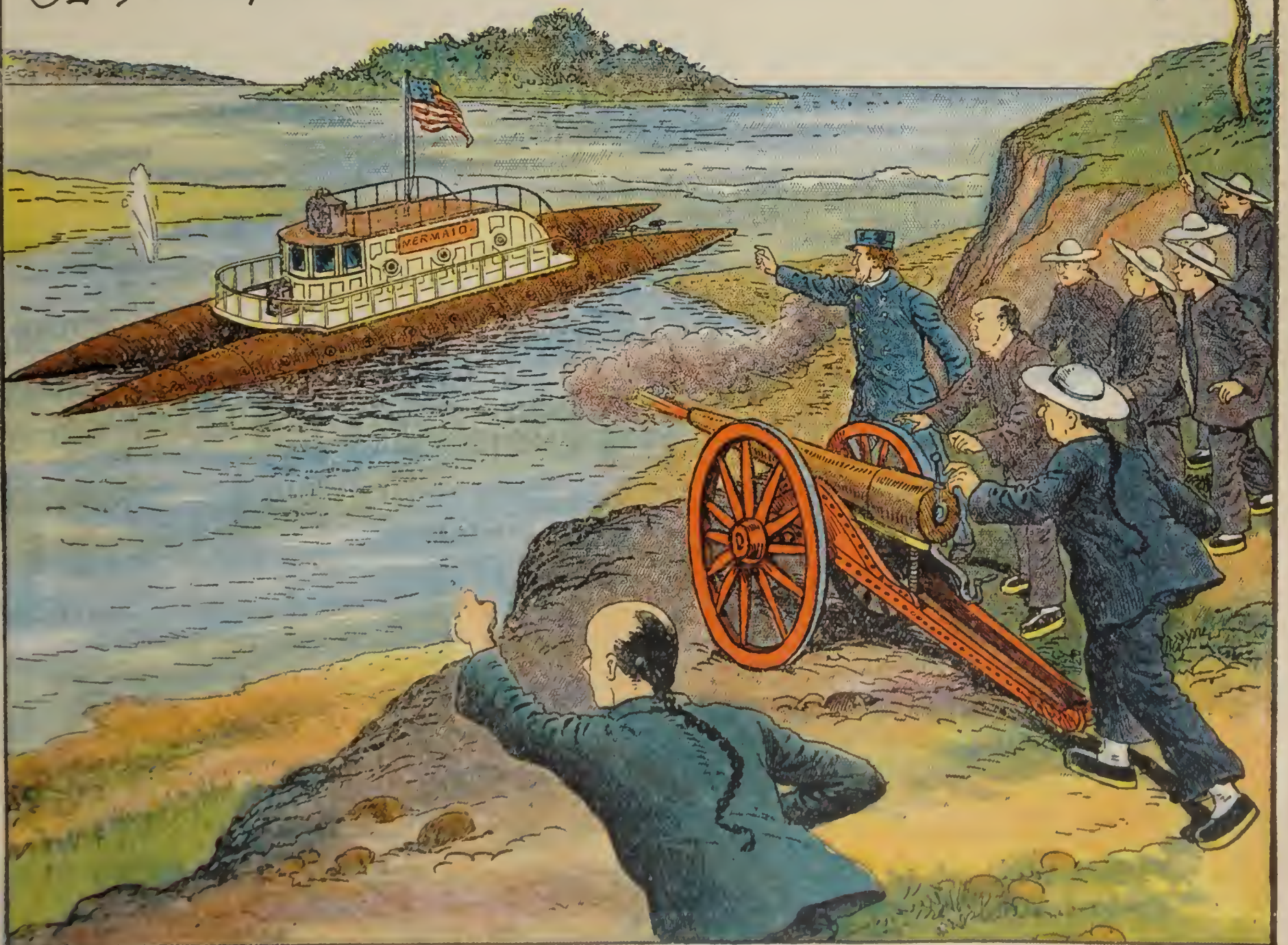
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Price 5 Cents.

JACK WRIGHT'S SUBMARINE CATAMARAN;

OR, THE PHANTOM SHIP OF THE YELLOW SEA.

By NONAME.



There came a belch of fire and smoke, a thunderous roar and a terrible scream as a heavy shot came hurtling down from the bluff toward the Mermaid.

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CHAPTER I.

OFF TO THE RESCUE.

It was a dark, gloomy night in September, 18—, and a thick haze overhung the sea, on the Atlantic coast, in the vicinity of Wrightstown at the head of a small, land-locked bay.

Lights in the houses glowed dimly out upon the gloom, and the threatening aspect kept people indoors around their cheerful firesides.

There was a magnificent dwelling on the outskirts of the town, owned and occupied by a boy of nineteen, after whose father the place had been named, to which the reader's attention is called.

Jack Wright was the boy's name, and he was an inventor of strange submarine boats, the marvelous nature and accomplishments of which gained him a world-wide reputation.

On the night in question he sat within the library of his home on the ground floor, intently studying some complicated drawings he had devised, showing the construction of a new contrivance which he had just completed building, for navigating under water.

The boy was finely built, handsomely dressed, and had dark, curly hair, snapping, black eyes, and a handsome, resolute face.

His library was a small, beautifully furnished room, containing a great many books, and illumined by a soft drop-light.

As he sat there engrossed with his work, and unsuspecting of danger, he did not see the figure of a stalwart man appear at the open window in back of him, and standing upon the broad piazza, peer in at him, with a black mask covering his face.

The mysterious prowler was clad in a shabby suit of clothes, and clutched a dagger in his hand, the long blade of which gleamed brightly when the beams of the light fell upon it.

Having seen that the young inventor was quite alone, the stranger softly stepped into the room, glided over to Jack, and holding the point of his weapon close to the boy's throat he lightly touched his arm.

"Jack Wright!" he exclaimed in deep, bass tones.

Had the young inventor been nervous, the sudden shock of being thus accosted when imagining he was all alone might have caused a scene.

But Jack had no such timidity, for he coolly and without a start glanced slowly around and saw, without any visible emotion, that a masked stranger stood behind him, menacing his life.

He sized the man up from head to foot, let his glance rest upon the dagger for a moment, and then asked, in calm, steady tones:

"Well, sir, what do you want?"

The stranger was surprised at the boy's careless demeanor. "You are a nervey fellow!" he could not help remarking, in admiration.

"Are you going to murder me?" asked the young inventor,

in careless tones, "or did you do this merely to frighten me, sir?"

"Your life is at stake!" emphatically replied the man.

"Ah! Then you have a motive. What is it—robbery, malice, revenge, or what?"

"I want all your valuables," confessed the stranger. "I am a thief!"

"Now you are acting sensibly. My mind is relieved, for I was perplexed about you."

"You observe that I hold a dagger at your throat, I presume?"

"Of course," assented the boy, shooting a side glance at the blade.

"Its point is steeped in deadly poison, and a mere scratch with it would kill you," said the masked man, in significant tones.

"Well?" queried Jack, still unmoved by the slightest tremor of fear.

"If you do not instantly give me the wallet filled with money, which I saw you place in your breast-pocket ten minutes ago, I will thrust my weapon up to the hilt in your neck!"

The deadly earnestness of the man's tones, coupled with his savage demeanor, told plainly that he would brook no trifling.

"Ain't you a stranger in Wrightstown?" demurely asked Jack, who wanted to gain time in order to give any one a chance to enter and interrupt the startling game the man was playing.

"I am an escaped convict from the adjacent town of D—. There is no use lying about the matter," admitted the man. "My object is to get money to enable myself to seek safety in flight. I may as well be candid. Now, hand it over, or take the consequence!"

"And if I refuse—what then?" demanded Jack, curiously.

"I am a desperate man, and I'll take it from your corpse!"

At that moment another man appeared at the window.

He saw at a glance what was transpiring in the library.

And with one spring he landed in the room, and caught the masked man by the throat; with a powerful jerk backward he slammed the thief down upon the floor, and as the poisoned dagger fell out of his hand the newcomer fell upon him and roared:

"Donner und blitzen! I vhas got you alretty!"

He was a young Dutchman, with a dumpy figure, exceedingly fat, his face red with anger and his light hair bristling.

"Oh, Lord!" gasped the thief, as the newcomer seized him by the hair and banged his head on the floor till his senses began to get hazy. "Stop! You're battering my head in!"

"Hang on to him, Fritz!" cried Jack, recognizing the newcomer as one of his best friends. "Don't let the rascal go!"

"Py shiminetty! I vhas proke his het sooner as do dot!" gasped the young Dutchman, who was of an excitable, pugnacious nature.

Jack ran to his friend's assistance and in a twinkling they tied the thief hand and foot with their handkerchiefs, and arose.

He had an ugly, hang-dog countenance, they saw below his

mask; and he swore at them roundly, but they paid no heed to his threats and raving.

"You arrived just in time!" said Jack, with a smile. "He was going to kill me, Fritz; but—hark! What's that—voices?"

"Dere vhas some men by der yard," said Fritz Schneider, as he peered out the window. "Yah, und here dey come up by der biazza."

"What do they want, I wonder?"

Just then several excited men appeared outside of the window.

"There he is now!" shouted one of them, and he pointed in at the thief, and the strangers came in through the window.

"What's the matter, gentlemen?" asked Jack, facing them.

"That man, Tom Bullock, is an escaped prisoner, and we are constables, who have tracked him here from the D—jail," explained the man.

"Oh, I see! Take your prisoner back, then, for I do not want him here," said Jack, with a smile. "And if you haven't got evidence enough to convict the rascal, call upon me and I'll have him sentenced just for trying to rob and murder me."

"Did he do that?" asked the man, in surprise. "I am sorry. But when we put him behind the bars again, he goes to stay ten years."

And so saying the men took their prisoner away, with many apologies for the trouble caused the boy.

Left alone with Fritz Schneider, the young inventor laughed and said:

"I hope I'll never get such a call again; but if I do I'll probably get the worst of it. I'm glad you came, for more reasons than one, Fritz."

"Yah," answered the young Dutchman, vigorously nodding his frowsy head and pulling down his vest, "I dink so somedimes."

"I was just looking over the plans of the Mermaid," said Jack, "and as my new submarine catamaran is perfect in every detail, after a year of work at constructing her, I do not need them any more."

And igniting the papers upon the beautiful, tiled hearth, he burnt them; watching them until they were consumed to ashes.

The young inventor had completed one of the most marvelous boats of the age, and after several trials he found that it worked to a far greater degree of perfection than two previous submarine boats of which he was the author, and in which he made voyages.

It was at that moment floating in a workshop of elaborate design, at the foot of the magnificent garden, along the back of which ran a wide, deep creek, which emptied into Wrightstown Bay.

As soon as the paper was consumed Jack turned to his friend and said:

"Fritz, I must find some use for my catamaran now."

"Och! vot you vant alretty—to go away mit dot poat?"

"Remember the pleasure, exciting adventures, and all the money we gained by our two first voyages across the ocean? Wouldn't you like to repeat them?"

"I dink so," said Fritz, lighting his pipe.

Jack walked over to the window and peered out at the gloomy aspect stretching all the way to the seashore, where, upon the rocky crags, he had caused a lighthouse to be built, and its glowing beacon now shed its rays out upon the sea.

Rain had begun to fall in torrents, thunder was muttering hoarsely in the distance, and upon the heaving billows that dashed furiously into the bay a fleet of fishing smacks were tossing wildly, and straining at their cables.

The raging sea was beating against the base of the lighthouse, the monster waves breaking in surf that boomed like artillery and flung showers of foam and spray high in the air.

"It is a terrible night!" exclaimed Jack. "And, hark! What's that?"

He bent his head in an attitude of listening, and heard a dull booming that arose above the noise of the raging elements.

"The minute guns of a ship in distress off the coast!" he muttered.

"Shiminey Christmas!" cried Fritz, excitedly. "Und dere goes de lighthouse bell! You hear dot? You hear dot?"

Clang-clang! clang-clang! pealed out the tolling bell from the lighthouse tower, warning the inhabitants of Wrightstown that there was a tempest-tossed vessel off shore in need of help, and the dreadful intonations caused many a heart to quake, and many a man to shudder with pity and dread.

"See!" exclaimed Jack. "Every one in the town is aroused by the doleful bell and the booming of the gun. They are all leaving their houses, and men, women and children are hurrying out to the rocky headland to see the wreck and to render aid, if they can."

Boom! boom! roared out the smothered tones of the guns, and soon the beetling rocks were swarming with people, all of whom gazed long and earnestly out over the black waste of turbid waters at several signal rockets, streaking up to the dark sky.

When the lightning blazed across the inky heavens they saw a storm-tossed ship, a league from shore, with masts and rigging blown away by the furious gale.

It was beaten by the waves that breached over her decks, and they saw a number of her crew clinging on for dear life, while the shrieking wind drove the hapless wreck in toward the rocks.

The rudder lines were broken, and the craft was helpless now.

From where they stood Jack and his friend saw the harrowing scene, and a thrill of pity passed over them.

"If the ship strikes the rocks it is lost!" said the young inventor.

"Couldn't ve do noding dot vhe safe her?" gasped Fritz, with a shiver.

"Yes; follow me! We will go out to her in the Mermaid, and tow her to a safe anchorage within the bay."

"Hurray!" yelled Fritz, delightedly. "Vhere vhas Dim?"

"Tim Topstay? The old sailor is on board of the boat now. He got three sheets in the wind to-day at the tavern, and went aboard to sleep off the effects. Come, hurry, and with the help of God we may be able to rescue the shipwrecked sailors!"

They rushed out of the house at the top of their speed, and dashing across the garden they ran into the workshop.

Part of the floor was inundated, and in this water floated a huge catamaran of peculiar formation, built of aluminum, a white metal like burnished silver, stronger, tougher and lighter than steel.

The doors leading to the creek were flung open, the two boys sprang aboard the boat, entered the pilot-house, and Jack started the machinery, driving the catamaran out upon its errand of rescue.

CHAPTER II.

THE LETTER.

The throng of people swarming upon the rocks were suddenly startled by seeing a huge ball of glaring light shooting out a broad sheen of dazzling beams across the bay, near the creek.

It went plunging rapidly toward the opening in the head-

land, and then a tremendous halo of light flashed up all around it, and they beheld a peculiar-looking catamaran, the streaking fire coming from a powerful searchlight on top of the pilot-house, and the halo pouring from numerous dead lights along the conical hulls.

Each of these hulls were cylinders eight feet in diameter, tapering to points at both ends, and each stern was furnished with a rudder and two propellers apiece. The hulls were one hundred feet long.

They were joined by a metal deck, in front of which was a round pilot-house with glass windows, the muzzle of a pneumatic gun protruding from the front, and a cabin aft of it in which were doors and circular windows guarded by steel wire netting.

From the top of the cabin to the sterns extended rods from which shafts ran down to the decks of the hulls with propellers upon them for rising or descending under water.

In the wheel-house stood Jack, and beside him a man in sailor costume, with a wooden leg, a glass eye and a sandy beard.

He was old Tim Topstay, chiefly notable for his lying propensity, his quality as a navigator, and his intimate friendship for Jack.

Tim was keeping a keen lookout ahead, and as the catamaran flew over the tossing waves at a speed of forty knots an hour, he exclaimed, as they opened up the headland:

"Hard-a-port! Hard-a-port, lad!"

"Port it is, Tim!" replied the boy, spinning the wheel around.

"Ease her off a bit to starboard, Jack."

"Do you see the ship yet, old fellow?"

"Ay, ay; an' only half a mile from shore, by thunder!"

On dashed the catamaran, riding the furious billows like a cork, and a wild cheer burst from the town people upon the rocks as they saw the boat flash by, and realized that it was going to the rescue of the shipwrecked crew.

The young Wizard of Wrightstown, as Jack was called, was a prime favorite with every one, and not a soul of those anxious people but what offered up a prayer for his safety.

The pilot-house was about ten feet in diameter, and from his position at the wheel the boy could control every movement of the vessel by a series of levers upon a switchboard on the wall.

He turned one of them as the boat drew near the wreck, and slackened the speed, while Tim kept the rays of the searchlight flashed upon the drifting ship.

Flinging open one of the plates of thick, tough glass in the turret, the boy hailed the despairing crew with:

"Ship ahoy! Stand by to catch a tow-line."

"Ay, ay!" came an eager response from the wreck.

"Fritz!" shouted the young inventor.

"Yah!" replied the Dutch boy, emerging through a door from the cabin.

"Make fast a hawser to the staunchion aft, and fling them the other end."

The Dutch boy saluted, and disappeared through the door again.

Jack then drove the Mermaid as near to the wreck as he could, and a moment later Fritz emerged from a door in the rear of the deck-house and flung the sailor a long line.

It was made fast to the wreck, and with the other end secured to his boat, Jack turned her around, and towed the vessel back toward Wrightstown Bay, dragging it from the very jaws of destruction.

A tremendous cheer burst from the nervous spectators upon the shore, which was echoed by the aided sailors as soon as this was done, and after a hard battle with the raging wind and waves, Jack towed the wreck into the bay.

"Did you notice that she is a sloop of war of the U. S. Government?" the boy asked Tim.

"Ay, ay, lad!" answered the old sailor, with kindling eyes; "an' dash my fingerhead if it didn't 'mind me o' when I sarved along o' yer father aboard o' ther frigate Wabash. One night——"

"No yarns, Tim, no yarns now; we haven't got time," the boy interposed. "Here is a good anchorage now. Hail them."

The old sailor obeyed, and the dismantled ship came to anchor in safety off Wrightstown, and the people came flocking back from the rocks, boats put out to the wreck, and as Jack's hawser was cast off the fishermen took the saved crew ashore.

Jack drove his boat back to the creek, up which she passed, and turning the boat into his workshop again the doors were shut and they disembarked after extinguishing the electric lights.

"I have found use for my new invention at last," laughed the boy, as he returned to the house, "and I must say the Mermaid behaved nobly in the heavy sea way, don't you think so, boys?"

"She vhas pedder as noddin' you effer invended before," asserted Fritz.

"Ye kin shiver me, but I never sighted the beat o' her afore!" exclaimed Tim, enthusiastically. "But what are ye goin' to do wi' her, Jack?"

"That's what puzzles me," replied the boy, in perplexed tones, as they hurried into the house out of the wind and rain.

"Mr. Wright, here's a letter for you, sir," said a trim little servant, handing Jack an envelope. "It came by the late mail."

The boy entered the library with his friends and glanced at the letter.

"Hello! it's from the Government!" he exclaimed, in surprise.

Tim and Fritz sat down, and the boy opened the letter and read it.

A look of amazement overspread his face when he finished.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "here's a surprise, boys!"

"Wot's a s'prise?" demanded Tim, fastening his solitary eye on Jack.

"The contents of this letter."

"Vhy yer don't read it, den?" growled Fritz.

"I will. Just listen," said Jack, and he read the letter aloud. It was couched in the following terms:

"Department of War, Washington, D. C., Sept. 10, 18—.

"Mr. J. Wright:—Having learned that you invented a submarine craft of light draft, of the torpedo boat type, I beg leave to call your attention to the fact that you can make it available to the United States Government. For the past year the merchant marine plying between San Francisco and Shanghai have suffered greatly from attacks of an alleged phantom ship in the Whang Hai, or Yellow Sea.

"Up to date there have been ten American ships reported to us as having foundered by collision with this vessel, the crews and passengers barely saving their lives by escaping in their boats.

"Conflicting and grossly exaggerated stories are told of these assaults, all of which allege the supernatural appearance of the ship, and an appeal for protection has been made to the United States Government.

"The warships of the navy are all of too great draught to navigate the shallow waters of the Yellow Sea with safety, and Congress had therefore appropriated the sum of \$50,000 as a reward for the entire extermination of the mysterious vessel which has occasioned the trouble.

"No efforts have thus far been made to secure the reward, and the nuisance has gone on unabated until there is a pos-

sibility of American traffic with the ports of the Yellow Sea and along the Yang-tse-kiang coming to an abrupt end, causing an immense loss to our American commerce.

"If you desire to undertake the task of capturing, exterminating, or exposing the phantom ship, by communicating with me you will ascertain all details, and become duly empowered to act under a Letter of Marque as an agent of this Government. Yours respectfully,

James Braine,
"Secretary of War."

The contents of the letter astonished the trio, and for several moments not one of them uttered a word when Jack finished, for they were all thinking the matter over intently.

At last Jack spoke:

"What do you think of it, boys?"

"Think? Lor' bless yer, lad," ejaculated Tim, "it's jist ther werry chance I've been prayin' fer like a sinner, so's ter git erway from here an' enjoy a trip on ther Mermaid, a-cressin' ther sea where I b'long."

"Yah—und me, too," said Fritz solemnly.

"Then you are both in favor of attempting this task?"

"Aye, aye!" exclaimed Tim.

"Yah, yah!" echoed Fritz.

"And so am I," declared Jack.

That settled their future movements then, and the boy at once wrote a letter to Mr. Braine, accepting his proposal and asking for details.

When this was finished the three friends sat around the table, and Jack sketched out their plan of action on the prospective cruise, and gave Tim and Fritz instructions about fitting out their submarine boat for its long journey.

Both of his friends lived in magnificent dwellings close to Jack's residence, and conducted flourishing businesses, and when they left the boy that night they promised to begin their preparations the next day, to get everything in readiness.

On the following morning the young inventor had scarcely finished his breakfast when a servant announced the commanding officer of the ship Jack had saved the night before, and going into the parlor the boy met the officer.

He was a middle-aged man in uniform, and wore a black beard.

"I have come to personally thank you for the great service you rendered my crew and ship last night," said the officer, warmly shaking the boy's outstretched hand, "for if you had not come to our assistance the poor craft would have been wrecked."

"It is always a pleasure to me to help people in distress," replied Jack. "I hope none of your crew were lost?"

"Not one, I am happy to say. The Sea Cat was badly damaged, of course, but can easily be repaired. Had not our rudder lines broken in the storm we might have made a safe harbor or rode out the blow. As it was, we got into dire trouble. But it was a most singular craft you saved us with."

"Yes, an invention of my own," replied Jack, with a laugh. "It is a submarine catamaran, and I have no doubt that she is the fastest boat in the world, so far as speed goes."

"So I observed," replied the man. "An electric boat, I presume?"

"Yes, sir; and much different in looks and operation than any submarine craft ever yet invented."

"Have you any objection to showing her to me?"

"None whatever. I'll give you a ride in her, if you like, too."

"Nothing would afford me greater pleasure, sir."

"Then come with me," said Jack courteously, as he put on his hat, and he led the officer out of the back door.

All trace of the storm had blown away, and the sea had

calmed down, the sky was blue and cloudless, the sun shone down, and the turning leaves of bush and tree were spotted with globules of water that flashed like myriads of diamonds.

The officer glanced around, and exclaimed:

"You have got a beautiful place here, Mr. Wright."

"It was not so fine a few years ago," laughed Jack, recalling to mind the time when he and his father lived there, inventing the first boat Jack constructed, before he gained the wealth he then had.

They entered the workshop and went on board the Mermaid, the officer admiring the graceful outlines and odd shape of the catamaran.

But as they passed within the boat a dark look of exultation crossed the man's face, and he uttered softly to himself:

"The young fool! He little suspects my design. How well I deceived him! Let him take me out into his boat. I'll guarantee he won't come back in it alive. It is strange how one crime leads to another."

CHAPTER III.

THE THREE SUBMARINE BOATS.

Jack first explained to the officer the advantage of using aluminum in the construction of his boat, as its great strength was better adapted to resisting the enormous pressure under water than steel.

He then brought him into the pilot house, and after showing the indicators that gauged the power, speed, depth and so on, he then explained the different levers, showed his nautical instruments, charts and furniture, and then brought him back in the cabin.

It communicated with the pilot house by a door, and was a large, magnificently furnished room, combining a place to dine or lounge, with a number of curtained berths in which to sleep, while the library and ornaments and pictures were of the best to be obtained.

It was illuminated by arc lights, as was the entire boat.

Passing through another door, they entered a combined galley and storeroom, fitted up with every requisite; in back of that was an apartment filled with arms, ammunition, diving suits of aluminum, rope chains and other paraphernalia appertaining to divers, and in the end room was the electrical plant for operating the boat.

The room was equipped with a motor, storage batteries, and a dynamo.

The screws of the catamaran were twin 60-inch blades, and at such a pitch as to allow the motor to revolve them at about 10,000 revolutions a minute for their maximum speed, while the motor itself was coupled directly to them, the armature and screw shafts being rigidly united, and practically forming a single shaft.

Between the motor bearing and stuffing box were spring and double thrust bearings, self lubricating, and the motor was of the series kind, the armature and field wires being permanently connected in wires.

Its winding was such that it would carry a current of 700 amperes of 2,000 volts pressure, equal to 200 electrical horse power.

The accumulators were 2,000 in number of the 23 m type, contained in vulcanite cells 6 3-4 inches long, 7 1-8 inches wide, by 10 inches high, closed by hermetically sealed vulcanized covers, save for small perforations which allowed any excess of gas to escape. Each cell consisted of twenty-five perforated lead plates, filled with a paste of oxide of lead and diluted sulphuric acid, placed side by side, and separated by vulcanized forks; each alternate plate was connected to a lead

strip projecting through the covers, forming a pole of one cell, while the others were similarly connected to form the other pole.

Each cell had four volts electro-motive force, and an unlimited capacity of ampere hours, as the automatic dynamo recharged them as soon as the supply they contained was exhausted.

From one end of every group of fifty cells an insulated wire ran to the switchboard in the pilot house, after passing through the different parts of the boat to which the electric power had to be applied as occasions demanded.

"It is the most complete arrangement I ever saw," said the officer, admiringly, as he glanced at the shelves upon which the batteries were stored, "but I do not understand yet how you can go under water in this boat for any length of time."

"The hulls are, of course, hollow," replied Jack, "and are divided into three compartments apiece, all filled with air. There are pumps which are put in motion by electricity, forcing the air out of the central chambers, and compressing it into the end ones. A sea trap in each central chamber is then opened, allowing the water to rush in in any quantity desired, and the weight sinks the boat. By starting the wheels on the bars astern I can raise or lower the boat at will to any depth when in motion."

"Oh, I see."

"At each row of deadlights are placed incandescent lights with reflectors," continued the boy, "which throw out a halo around the boat and illumine the water for half a mile when under the surface. Did you observe the pneumatic gun projecting from the wheel-house?"

"I did."

"Well, it has extraordinary force, and once loaded, as it has reservoir air chambers, it is good for one hundred shots."

"But where do you get the air to breathe under water?"

"From reservoirs in the bulkheads, where it is compressed and dispersed as we need it, automatically. Besides this, I have a spray of lime injected from atomizers in the ceilings to purify it, and valves to carry off the vitiated atmosphere used up by breathing."

"This boat must have cost you a fortune, as the aluminum of which it is built is expensive, and every detail within it is of the most elaborate design and costly material."

"I have spent half a million building her," carelessly replied Jack.

The officer gave a violent start, and glanced around at the massive steel braces, posts and girders forming the skeleton of the boat.

"Do you expect to get your money back?" he asked.

"No," promptly replied Jack. "I built this boat for my own amusement."

"You must be a boy millionaire!" the man involuntarily exclaimed.

"In one respect you are mistaken," quietly replied Jack. "I have always been ambitious to make a flourishing city of Wrighttown, and I invest most of my money in building houses, stores and factories to increase the population, and it is steadily growing now."

"Still you get an income from the rents," said the officer. "But, as I see most of the houses are built of wood, I suppose you are heavily insured, owing to the absence of a large fire department?"

"On the contrary," replied the boy, "I have but little insurance, as I cannot get it on account of our poor facilities for preventing fires. It is my intention to improve it shortly, however, so as to be able to cover myself against possible losses. We have as yet few fires here, however, that the water supply troubles me."

"How about a trip on the water, as you suggested, Mr. Wright?"

"We will go, if you like," replied the boy, with a nod, and they entered the pilot house, where Jack rang an electric gong.

Two of his workmen opened the creek doors, and grasping the wheel, Jack turned lever No. 1, and started the boat out.

It ran down the waterway to the bay, and as it glided out upon the now glassy surface of the bay, Jack was surprised to see a number of men running from the town, shouting and gesturing.

They continued on down to the water's edge, and ran out on a dock that projected out into the bay.

"What's the matter with them, I wonder?" muttered Jack.

"Oh, they must be shouting to some one on the water," replied the officer, as a pallor overspread his face, and a glitter came to his eyes.

"There ain't any boat but this one out on the water," said Jack, glancing around with a perplexed look on his features.

"In that case, they can't be calling any one."

"Yes, they are; listen!"

The men had all reached the end of the dock by this time, and pausing there, began to hail at the top of their voices:

"Mermaid ahoy! Mermaid ahoy!"

They were fishermen, civilians, and sailors from the Sea Cat, it was evident by their attire, and they all seemed to be very much excited.

"Why, they are calling to us!" said Jack, his face clearing.

"Don't pay any attention to them," remarked the officer, with a dissatisfied look. "Wait till we return."

"It won't be any trouble to run over to them on the way out," said Jack. "We may as well find out what's wanted. They all look as if they were very much excited. Don't you see that some of them are part of your own crew, captain?"

The man nodded, and as Jack turned the catamaran toward the dock, he was amazed to observe how agitated his passenger had suddenly become.

"What's the matter—are you sick?" he asked, wonderingly.

"I don't feel very well," replied the man in trembling tones.

A clammy perspiration had now burst out upon his forehead.

"I had better put you ashore on the dock, then," said Jack.

"No, no!" was the officer's hasty reply, accompanied by a violent start. "I don't want to go ashore. I don't want you to land."

"Why not?" demanded Jack in amazement.

"I have my reasons; turn back."

"No, sir!" exclaimed Jack, bluntly.

"If you don't," excitedly replied the officer, "I'll kill you."

And whipping a revolver out of his pocket, he aimed it at Jack's heart with deliberate precision, and the boy obeyed him.

The young inventor was greatly amazed at this proceeding.

"That's a nice way to act," he exclaimed indignantly. "What do you mean by treating me this way, after all I did for you?"

The man uttered a sardonic laugh.

"You never did anything for me," he said bluntly.

"Didn't I save your life, and your ship?" he demanded.

"No, you didn't. I ain't the captain of the Sea Cat, as I said."

"You ain't?"

"Of course not. I lied to you."

"Then, who the deuce are you?"

"Tom Bullock," replied the man. "See here—do you know me now?"

He pulled off the false beard he wore and flung it on the floor.

"So you are the fellow who tried to rob me last night?" said Jack.

"I am. Do you remember my face?"

"No. You was masked."

"So I was. I have deceived you famously, haven't I?"

"It's no wonder; I never saw the captain of the Sea Cat close by."

"Oh, I knew that. You see, I escaped the constables last night, and found the shipwrecked crew at the Sea Spider House. There I stole this uniform of the captain's while it was drying, and having this false beard with me, I disguised myself. Then I carried out the plan I heard the captain purpose doing by calling on you."

"Ah—you schemed to steal this catamaran to escape?"

"Exactly," replied the man, coolly. "You are a good guesser. You will now proceed across the bay and out on the sea. I will then give you further instructions how to act. Do you understand?"

There was nothing for Jack to do but obey, for the desperate man would doubtless blow his brains out if he refused, and then manage the boat himself, as the boy had innocently shown him just how to work it.

It was evident to Jack that the men on shore knew that the fugitive was aboard of the boat, and they must have learned it by tracking him to the workshop, where the employes had doubtless admitted that he had gone off in the boat.

The boy was entirely at the mercy of the man, too, for he had no weapons with him, but he kept a keen lookout for a chance to turn the tables on him.

The machinery was only working at half power, and the boy glanced back, when with a violent start he saw that the Mermaid was now being pursued by two more submarine boats which he had built and used in times gone by.

One was the Sea Spider, which Fritz was guiding, and the other was the electric turtle, managed by Tim, and upon the decks of both vessels were a score of armed men.

It was evident to Jack that Tom Bullock had committed some atrocious deed to cause such anxiety for his recapture, and he saw that his two friends must have suspected he was in trouble to have taken the two boats out to pursue the catamaran.

As soon as the fugitive saw the pursuing boats and armed men he grew nervous and intensely excited.

"On!" he yelled, hoarsely. "Faster—faster, upon your life! Put on full speed, curse you, or they'll overtake us and hang me! If you don't outstrip them, by heavens I'll kill you—I'll kill you!"

There was a terrible look upon his face, and Jack dared not disobey him, for his life was at stake.

CHAPTER IV.

A NIGHT OF HORROR.

Jack turned the lever around as far as it would go, and the catamaran dashed ahead with such fearful velocity that Tom Bullock fairly became frightened.

Fast as the two first inventions Jack built had been, the new one so rapidly outstripped them that in four minutes they were left a mile astern, and steadily kept losing ground.

The Mermaid was a marvel.

She glided over the top of the waves as lightly as a cork, and in a twinkling shot out on the ocean.

"Which way, now?" demanded the boy.

The fugitive looked around.

As soon as he took his glance away, Jack seized a pair of

rubber gloves, shot his hand into one and pulled a wire from the wall.

Slight as was the noise he made, Tom Bullock heard it and instantly fastened a keen, scowling glance upon him.

"What was that?" he demanded, suspiciously.

"I put on my gloves," replied Jack, in cool tones.

"What for?"

"To guard my hands from chafing on the wheel spokes."

"Oh, but you've got a wire in your hand!"

"Yes; it's broken. Will you hold the wheel till I fix it?"

"No tricks, mind you!"

"Can't you keep me covered with your pistol?"

"That's so. Go ahead," said Bullock, grasping the wheel with one hand.

Jack fastened one of the wires to a binding post and turned one of the levers, causing a current of electricity to flash into the wheel.

As it was made of metal it readily took the current, and Tom Bullock suddenly gave a terrible yell as it shot into him, bent himself convulsively nearly double, and his grip tightened on the spoke.

Another wave of current struck him, and twisting his body all out of shape, and burning his hand as if he had clasped a red-hot coal, it knocked him flying across the room, filling him with such unutterable agony that he shrieked and fainted.

Jack glanced down at him in pity, for the agony suffered by the wretch was as if every tingling nerve in his body had been grasped by a pair of red-hot pincers, and had been torn out by the roots.

"Poor wretch!" the boy muttered. "I hated to do it, but there was no other way to save myself. He's done for now, though."

He disconnected the wire, and as the wheel was then safe to handle with the gloves on, he grasped the spokes, turned the boat around and sped back for the entrance to the bay.

It was reached in a few moments, and he saw the Sea Spider and the Turtle coming up, full speed, and opened a window.

"It's all right, boys—I've got him!" he cried, cheerily.

"Hurrah!" yelled the pursuers. "Hurrah for Jack Wright!"

"Has he been up to any more mischief?"

"Murdered one of the constables last night, and took his pistol," was the reply.

"Great heavens! It's no wonder he was so frightened, desperate and anxious to escape. Turn back, and I'll land him, if he's alive."

Away sped the three boats for the pier, and as the news had spread, a large gathering of people came down to the shore.

The Mermaid took the lead and kept it, the two other boats coming on in regular order after it, and soon reached the dock.

Here the stunned fugitive was landed and carried to the hotel, where they put him in bed and summoned a physician.

As soon as Tim and Fritz landed their crews they ran their boats up the creek after the catamaran, and the three strange crafts were put away in the big workshop.

Jack's two friends spent the day preparing the catamaran for her long journey, and by nightfall everything was in readiness.

By the time Jack retired to his library the night was well advanced, and although the sky was clear, a strong wind came in from the sea.

Ten o'clock struck and Jack stepped out into the hall, when there came a furious ring at the door-bell.

The boy flung it open and saw one of his workmen on the threshold.

"Well, what's the matter now?" queried the young inventor.

"Tom Bullock has escaped from the tavern, sir!" gasped the man.

"What! Escaped? How?"

"They thought he was as good as dead from that electric shock, sir, an' didn't guard him. But he wuz only playin' possum, slipped out a winder when nobody was lookin' an' got away."

"What a disappointment for the police!"

"They've been searchin' all over for him, but he ain't found yet, an'——"

"Hark! What is that? The fire bell!"

"Sure enough, so it is; an' look there, it's a dozen fires!"

The man pointed from the piazza in several directions, and the startled boy glanced around and saw smoke rising in several places.

Ding-dong! Ding-dong! sounded the dismal clang from the tower in the town hall, awakening every one from their slumbers.

People rushed from their houses and thronged the streets, and the volunteer fire department turned out, fifty men dragging the only engine Wrightstown boasted of, and many more pulling the hook-and-ladder truck, and a dozen at the hose carriage.

Shouts began to peal out in the streets, pounding footsteps of the running firemen arose, wheels rumbled, engine bells clanged, and a scene of excitement began to arise when it was found that more fires continued to break out in new places.

Dense clouds of smoke began to roll up, mingled with licking tongues of flames, millions of sparks shot up in the air, and the wind, catching the fire, spread it with startling rapidity.

"By heavens, the whole town is afire!" gasped Jack, in horror.

He put on his hat and dashed out of the house.

"It's the work of an incendiary!" he heard people shout on all sides.

Just then the conversation which occurred on the Mermaid returned to Jack's mind, when Tom Bullock asked him if he had his property insured, and a thrill passed through the boy, for he saw in this fire the work of vengeance.

Bullock had escaped, and to gain revenge for the misery Jack caused him he had doubtless set fire to the buildings to ruin the boy by leaving him bankrupt.

Certain of this, Jack gave utterance to the cry:

"Bullock started the fire!"

Then hundreds kept a lookout for Bullock,

The strong wind fanned and fanned the flames, and a vivid glare flashed up to the heavens, mingled with clouds after clouds of dense, grimy smoke, and still new fires continued to appear, until at last there was no possibility of the meager department hoping to cope with the conflagration.

It soon became evident that the strong wind would cause the destruction of the entire town, and people began the work saving their possessions by carrying them out upon an adjacent hill, where the reservoir was situated.

By the time Jack reached the square in the centre of the town the devastating ruin became apparent to him.

Unless something like a miracle occurred, it seemed certain that within an hour not a house would escape the ravaging tongues of flame then roaring and licking through the air, seeking to devour everything in their reach.

But an idea occurred to the boy, and as most of the people kept flocking toward the public square, and the town hall bell kept up a furious ringing, Jack mounted the steps of the pedestal that supported a statue in honor of his father.

"Out of the town, every one, and I will save your homes!" he cried in loud, thrilling tones. "Up to the hills! Up to the hills!"

This cry was taken up and rang out on every side, and the terrified people hastened from the burning town, and flocked upon the hills in back of Wrightstown.

As the last of them were leaving, a crowd of men came rushing through the main street in pursuit of a half-naked man, who was brandishing a flaming fire-brand in his hand.

He was Tom Bullock, the man who set Wrightstown afire!

With wildest yells on they came, hurling showers of missiles after the flying wretch, and, hemming him in on all sides, they drove him into one of the burning buildings, where he perished.

As soon as the town was cleared of the last person, Jack called a dozen of the ablest men together, and, arming them with axes, he brought them up to the reservoir and yelled:

"Break away the gates and flood the town!"

A cheer pealed from every one at this suggestion, and shower after shower of lusty blows were rained upon the stout planks that impounded tons upon tons of water there.

The splintered chips flew in all directions, and plank after plank was burst through at one side, where a deep gully once had run a stream down to the town.

Then out gushed the water in torrents, watched by the anxious multitude of men, women and children, gathered about on the gloomy hillside, the ruddy glow of the fierce flames lighting up their pale faces with a strange radiance.

Soon the entire structure gave way, and with a bellowing roar, a hiss like a thousand steam pipes, and a fearful rush, the water went rolling down in vast volumes upon the burning town.

A tremendous cheer pealed from the anxious spectators.

They watched it burst upon the houses and bury them, when like a flash and with an awful dull roar, the flames suddenly vanished, an enormous mass of steam and smoke arose to the sky, and then a dense gloom settled down.

A deathly silence followed, for some of those wildly beating hearts knew that their homes must have been carried away by the avalanche, destroying all they had.

The water continued to roar and gurgle from the fast emptying reservoir, until at last it was all gone, and then the moon burst out from behind a slowly drifting cloud-bank.

One quarter of the houses in the town laid a burnt and charred mass of black ruins, some of the smaller ones were overturned, or washed away, caved in and broken down from their foundations, and everything was drenched and tumbled about in wild confusion.

It was a loss of thousands of dollars, it was the impoverishment of many a poor family, it meant a lot of work to bring it to a semblance of its former self, and yet had Jack failed to send that flood down the entire place would have been burnt.

They slowly made their way back, and dispersed to look out for their respective belongings, and Jack, Tim and Fritz did the same.

Their places were strongly built of stone and brick, and withstood the avalanche better than any of the rest, and although the water had done some damage it did not amount to anything.

When the three met an hour later in Jack's house to compare notes, they considered themselves lucky.

Yet there was an anxious look on the boy inventor's face.

"Most of my houses are gone, boys," he said, sadly, "sweeping away my fortune at one swoop, and I have got but little left. Almost beggared, though, I do not despair. I have yet got a chance to win a stake from the Government, and I am going to do it by the help of heaven!"

CHAPTER V.

THE SMUGGLER.

Two weeks after the foregoing events occurred, Jack had all his preparations made for a voyage to the Yellow Sea in the Mermaid.

His negotiations with the Secretary of War were concluded, and having a detailed description of the phantom ship, a letter of marque, and all necessary information, he embarked.

Tim and Fritz accompanied him, the young Dutchman carrying a handsome but evil-minded pet parrot, which he called Bismarck, and Tim Dragging along a little, red, pet monkey named Whiskers.

All their businesses were left in the care of trusted superintendents, and they were all eager to get away.

It was a clear, cool day when the machinery was started, and the boat shot across the bay, but they were not cheered off by all the town like they had been on other occasions, as the poor people were too sad and too busy now to make a festival day.

As soon as the catamaran got out in deep water Jack set the course, and the Mermaid sped away southward along the coast, heading for the Gulf of Mexico, under Tim's guidance.

By nightfall they passed Sandy Hook, and saw several large ocean steamers coming from the port of New York, while in the distance another one was coming up the coast from the southward.

Jack, by this time, had relieved Fritz of the wheel, and while the Dutch boy, who was an expert electrician, went back in the battery room to examine the machinery, Tim kept a lookout.

A startled exclamation from the one-eyed old sailor caused the boy to look up querulously from the binnacle in front of him.

"Anything gone wrong, Tim?" he asked.

"Thar's a skiff with one man in it athwart our bows," replied Tim.

"What are they doing so far from shore?"

"Keel haul me if I know, sir."

"Ah! I see him now. He's got a lantern, swinging it."

"Ay. ay; an' by thunder thar burns a blue light on yonder incomin' steamer!"

"That's queer! Can the man in the boat be a harbor pilot?"

"I reckon not, 'cause they allers boards ships from their own wessels."

"What can that fellow's mysterious actions mean, then?"

"Might be jest as well to find out, Jack."

"I shall. Hold on, I'll stop the Mermaid and sink her a ways."

He turned lever No. 2 and the catamaran came to a pause.

Then he set the pumps in motion, compressing the air in the hulls, and the Mermaid settled down until half of the pilot-house was submerged, when Jack brought her to a pause.

Only a part of the turret now showed above water, and the divers could then see what transpired without being seen themselves.

Remaining stationary they saw several more signals pass between the man in the boat and the people upon the approaching steamer, after which the lights were suddenly extinguished.

The twinkling lights on the steamship drew nearer every moment, and then the great vessel came abreast of where the man sat silently rocking in his boat.

Jack had his glance fixed upon the big vessel, and saw two men suddenly appear upon the upper deck aft, with several large bags which they rapidly tossed overboard.

The bags floated, as they were made of inflated rubber, and the steamer passed on, leaving a broad track of foam in her wake.

She was soon lost in the distance, and the solitary man in the boat thereupon pulled hastily over to the floating bags.

Making them fast, astern, by a tow-line, he resumed his oars and began to leisurely pull toward the Highlands.

"He's a smuggler!" exclaimed Jack, as the truth dawned upon him.

"Ay, now," replied Tim, who was very much interested and

surprised at what had transpired, "an' I see that it's a Havana steamer."

"Then the bags must contain cigars. It is a clever scheme to cheat the U. S. customs duty, but I am going to spoil it for him."

"Are yer goin' fer ther lubber?" queried Tim.

"Of course I am," replied the boy, raising his boat to the surface.

He started her after the solitary boatman, and leaving the wheel in Tim's hands he took a rifle down from a rack on the wall, and seeing that it was loaded, he went out through the door at the side of the hull upon the narrow deck on the port side.

"Boat ahoy!" he shouted.

No reply came back, and Tim started the searchlight and turned its glaring rays full upon the smuggler.

He was as clearly revealed as if the sun shone upon him.

"Boat ahoy!" cried Jack again.

By this time the Mermaid was close to the other, and Tim brought her to a pause as the smuggler was resting on his oars.

"Ship ahoy!" replied the man, in gruff tones.

"Come aboard. We want you for smuggling!" said Jack. Instead of obeying the man started to row away.

"Haul to!" roared Jack, leveling his rifle at the man, "or I will fire!"

"Oh, don't shoot!" the man yelled back, in alarmed tones.

"Will you surrender?"

"No; I will give up the bags, though."

"We want you, too."

"Then you'll have to fight for me!" cried the smuggler.

And raising a big navy revolver he began to blaze away at the boy, when Jack returned his fire.

The boy was unhurt, but his fire proved more effectual, for a ball struck the man and caused him to cry out with pain.

"Surrender, or you'll get the worst of it!" shouted Jack, warningly.

"I'll die first!" replied the man, grimly.

Then he opened a fusillade again, and fearful of his bullets breaking the glass Tim closed the metal shutters over the windows.

Such shots fell harmlessly against the two-inch plates of the aluminum hulls, however, and again Jack escaped being hit.

By this time the boatman had discharged every shot in his pistol without doing any harm, and he then cut the bags loose from his boat, resumed his oars, and was upon the point of rowing away when Jack shouted:

"If you don't haul to, it will be the worse for you!"

"Go to the deuce!" replied the smuggler, defiantly.

"Look out, Jack, or you'll lose ther bags!" cried Tim, warningly.

The boy glanced at them and saw that they were sinking.

"He has jabbed the bags with his knife and let the air out of them!" muttered Jack. "Head the boat for them, Tim!" he added aloud.

The old sailor obeyed, and as soon as it hove up to the sinking bags the boy took a boat-hook down from a rack against the deck-house, and, catching hold of them, he hauled them in.

Fritz ran out to his assistance, and between them they dragged the bags up on the deck of the Mermaid.

The smuggler by this time had placed considerable distance between himself and the catamaran, and when Jack looked for him again he saw that the man was heading for an approaching tugboat, which had come out of the distant harbor.

He began to shout to attract attention, and succeeded so well that the tug was headed afterwards toward him.

By the time the catamaran shot after him, he had met the tug and boarded her, leaving his boat towing astern.

"Dem must be his vriends," said Fritz, in disgust; "und mit dot dugpoat, und all dem vellers, he vhas got away alretty."

"It appears to me that they are not trying to escape," replied Jack, watching the tug keenly; "but they are coming this way."

"Dem ve vhas haf a fight mit dem?" questioned Fritz, delightedly.

"It seems so. At any rate we will give them a hot reception."

"I dinks so, neider!" answered Fritz.

They watched the boat until it drew quite near.

"Why," said Jack, just then gaining a good look at the flag that was flying at the top of the pole, aft, "she's a revenue tug!"

Just then there came a hail from the boat.

"Haul to, there!"

"Ay, ay!" replied Jack, cheerily.

Tim ran the catamaran alongside of the tug and the boy saw the smuggler standing on deck talking to several Custom House inspectors, and pointing at the Mermaid.

"It's a smuggler, I tell you!" the man was saying. "And the proof of it is those bags lying on her deck!"

"He is turning the tables by accusing us of his own villainy!" said Jack, in surprise. "He is an artful dodger, by jingo!"

"You say you saw some men, on the steamer that passed, heave those bags overboard and that he picked them up?" one of the officers demanded, in sharp, suspicious tones.

"That's it exactly," assented the smuggler. "If you examine the bags you will find what I tell you to be correct."

Two of the officers now boarded the Mermaid.

"We've got a charge of smuggling against you!" said one of them to Jack. "And are informed that the contents of those bags lying there is contraband. What have you to say for yourself, young fellow?"

"I have no doubt the bags are filled with smuggled cigars," replied Jack, "for we saw them heaved from the steamer and picked up by the man who accuses us to save himself. He is the real smuggler, and is deceiving you."

"There must be something wrong here," growled the officer; "at any rate, we will examine the contents of the bags, for from information furnished us in New York we were put on the track of this plan. An interested party gave the job away, and we came down here as soon as the steamer was sighted, to intercept the scheme. That's how we happen to be here."

He opened the bags.

They were filled with unstamped cigar boxes.

"Just as I suspected," remarked the officer.

"I hope you are satisfied I told the truth," said the smuggler, in tones of injured innocence. "I saw them pick the bags up!"

"Liar!" exclaimed Jack, a dark look crossing his face.

"You can arrest these men, and I'll swear to their guilt!" the man continued, coolly, pointing at Jack and his friend.

"Of course we will!" said the officer, who was anxious to arrest somebody, for although these officers often make a haul of smuggled things, they do not often catch the guilty parties.

"My dear fellow, you shall do nothing of the kind!" replied Jack, in angry tones. "Come into my cabin and I will prove my innocence."

The officers glanced at each other, winked significantly, and followed Jack inside, when the boy produced his Government papers and showed them to the officers.

They merely laughed at such documents, as they could not understand such a mission as the boy was going on, and said, contemptuously:

"Boon! They are too ridiculous. We take no stock in them."

"What are you going to do about it, then?" asked Jack, threateningly.

"Take you back to New York with us!" was the cold answer. "You may prove your innocence, but we doubt it."

"But I can't lose the time, and go through the bother——"

"But you will have to, that's all!" rejoined one of the men, shrugging his shoulders.

"Well, I won't!"

"You'll see! We will tow you back!"

And so saying the officers passed out on deck.

As soon as they were out of the Mermaid, the boy saw that everything was in water-tight condition, and then said to Tim:

"Sink the catamaran, Topstay!"

The old sailor grinned and obeyed.

Down went the Mermaid beneath the waves a moment later, leaving the two astonished officers and the bags floundering on the surface of the sea.

CHAPTER VI.

BENEATH THE ATLANTIC.

Tim sank the Mermaid fifty feet before he brought her to a pause, and then turned on all the electric lights, flooding the water with an effulgence of light that streamed in all directions.

The halo coming from the deadlights illumined a broad belt around the boat, and the rays of the searchlight penetrated to the distance of a mile ahead, showing everything as clearly defined as if by day.

They were in a wonderful place, looking not unlike the abode of some monster of another world, for they were near the bottom.

Off on the port side there arose a grandly sweeping sand hill of Romer's Reef, which gleamed and glittered and rose to within a short distance of the surface, its bar causing the big ocean cruisers no end of trouble at low tide.

On the starboard side was a mass of rugged rocks worn by a deep gully as smooth as glass by incoming and outgoing tides that sweep continually with such force around the bend into New York Bay.

Various kinds of fishes were swimming about, clusters of seaweed drifted by, and water-logged planks shifted sluggishly along the debris deposited upon the bottom.

Diverging currents ran in different directions, and many a jagged rock rose here and there, threatening ships if the tide became very low.

Tim started the catamaran ahead at about fifteen knots, and kept his good eye fixed upon the compass, for it was just as easy to navigate the Mermaid below as it was on the surface.

It was some time since our friends had seen any marine mysteries exposed to their view, and they drank in the scene with eager avidity.

The configuration of the bottom changed continually as they forged ahead.

Sometimes it arose abruptly ahead, causing Tim to start the propellers on the bars aft, which raised the boat without emptying her of water; then there came a sudden descent, whereupon the propellers were reversed, driving the catamaran down again.

Tremendous chasms yawned below them in places miles in depth, submarine cliffs hedged them into vast gorges through which they shot, and mountains arose on all sides.

In fact, the outlines of the bed of the sea consisted of plains, mountains, valleys and rugged hills, exactly like the surface of the land; plants and aquatic animals grew there as they do on terra firma, and the only difference was that they

breathed and lived on the water, while terrestrial creatures and vegetation live on air.

As soon as Fritz became tired of the view he went back into the galley, as he was an excellent cook, and having prepared a tasteful supper he laid it on the cabin table and called his friends.

Tim brought the boat to a pause and smiled with anticipation, for he was as hungry as he could be, on account of the supper being delayed.

"Hello, club foot, how's yer game eye?" yelled an eldritch voice as he entered.

Tim scowled, for he was very sensitive over his glass optic and wooden peg, and glaring balefully at Bismarck, the parrot, who accosted him, he shook his fist at it, as it perched on the back of a chair, and growled:

"Belay, thar, yer lubber, or I'll twist yer jigger head fer bein' so cussed cheeky."

"Rats!" retorted the parrot, and it followed up this contemptuous adjective by such a volley of swearing at Tim that even the old sailor was shamed.

"Come, Tim, sit down," remonstrated Jack, with a grin, as the irate old sea dog began to swear back at the bird. "Supper's getting cold."

"I dink dot barrot vhas know vot he vhas shpoken aboutt vonct," chuckled Fritz, who had taught his bird its indecent vocabulary.

"Oh, stow yer jawin'-tackle!" growled Tim. "If yer'd a taught that ere lubber of a bird as much as I've teached Whiskers, yer might have somethin' ter be proud on, an'—oh—ouch! Wot in thunder's this?"

He sat down hard in the chair, as was his custom, on account of his wooden leg, and there came a squashing noise, as the contents of a custard pie flew all over him.

A roar of laughter from Fritz attested to the fact that he had put the pie there, and it made Tim mad, for he and Fritz were forever playing practical jokes upon each other whenever they had an opportunity.

"Och, du lieber Gott!" roared the young Dutchman, screaming with laughter. "Vot you doin' now, alretty?"

"You done this, you swab!" bellowed Tim, arising with surprising alacrity, the seat of his pants emblazoned with pie-stuffing; and he grabbed a dish full of biscuits and let them fly at his tormentor.

Fritz strove to dodge the flying missiles, but failed, and as soon as they were gone Tim continued to bombard him with the leg of mutton, a dish of boiled potatoes, and was following them up with the crockery and glassware, when Jack yelled:

"Stop! Stop, Tim, for heaven's sake! or we won't get any supper."

The latter warning succeeded in calming the old sailor quicker than Jack could have done it with a loaded shotgun, and as Fritz was getting much the worst of the row, he was glad to quit.

He cleaned himself with a towel, the half-demolished supper was saved, and peace was restored for a while, when they pitched into the food.

Under the glowing influence of a full stomach and a glass of grog, the old sailor's good humor was restored, and he smiled blandly again.

"I wonder how those officers got out of the mess we left them in?" asked Jack, with a broad grin, as he recalled the inspector's situation.

"I oxbect dot dey vhas got vetter as Dim vhas," chuckled Fritz.

"Oh, their messmates 'll pick 'em up," said the old sailor, giving the Dutchman a kick on the shin under the table. "When I wuz aboard o' ther frigate Wabash, I onct had a run-in wi' ther mate, an' though he weighed nigh onter three

hundred poun's, I picked him up wi' one hand, an' chucked him overboard——"

"Vun hand?" grinned Fritz.

"Aye, one hand! I had a powerful muscle in them days. It was a dark night, an' the ship wuz two hundred miles from land, but as he couldn't swim, an' the ship went on, I sprung overboard an' ketched him. Holdin' him up wi' one hand, I struck out wi' ther other, and reached land——"

"Two hundred miles off?" queried Jack blandly.

"Aye, aye, lad, an'——"

"Chestnuts!" screeched the parrot.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack and Fritz.

"Wot! Don't yer believe it?" growled Tim, glaring murderously at Bismarck.

"To tell you the truth, I don't," flatly answered the boy.

"Well," said Tim, as a grin came over his rugged face, "neither do I."

By this time the meal was finished, and a short time afterwards Jack and Tim turned in, leaving Fritz to navigate the boat.

By the following morning they were off Cape Hatteras, still under the sea, and the regular routine work went on when the Mermaid shot over to the Gulf Stream and followed its edge to the southward, the warm water of its strange current making a perceptible difference in the temperature of the boat.

Happening to glance out astern, Jack saw a tiny pilot-fish close to the hull, and recognizing what it was, he looked further and beheld a large shark following in the wake of the boat.

"That's a bad omen!" he exclaimed involuntarily.

"Wot's that?" demanded Tim, who, like most sailors, was very superstitious.

"Don't you see the shark following us?"

"Good Lor' A'mighty! One of us is a-goin' ter die, sure pop. It's a sure sign if one o' them critters keeps on in our wake!"

"If there's bound to be a death, then," said Jack grimly, "it ought to be that sea cannibal to pass in his chips, and I'll make him; swing the boat around, Tim."

The old sailor turned the catamaran, and Jack took a cartridge from a box, the projectile of which was filled with a high explosive invented by the boy.

The breech of the pneumatic gun was in the pilot house, and opening it, Jack thrust the cartridge into the already loaded gun.

By that time the Mermaid had turned around, and was facing the shark, when Jack sighted the gun and turned a lever discharging it.

There was no report, but a thud.

With lightning-like rapidity the projectile was hurled through the water, and striking the shark, it burst and blowed it to fragments.

"That settles his life!" said the young inventor.

Tim turned the boat around, and they continued ahead.

Two days thus passed by, and they arose to the surface to take an observation, when Jack found they were off the coast of Florida, in plain sight of Rubicon light, close to the Mexican gulf.

It was late in the afternoon, and as the boat was going by the numerous coral reefs lining the shore, our friends were startled by hearing a cry.

"Help! Help!" came the appealing voice.

"Hello!" exclaimed Jack, with a start. "Some one is in distress."

"Vere dot voice come from?" anxiously asked Fritz, gazing around.

"Shiver me, lads, but thar he is now," said Tim, excitedly. He pointed toward a small skiff containing a boy, who was

evidently without ears, standing up in the boat shouting to them.

The boat he was in seemed to be moving in behind the reefs with the tide, and they heard a hollow, gurgling roar rising above the din of the surf beating in upon the white, sandy beach beyond.

"He has lost his oars and can't manage the boat," said Jack. "Let us go over and put the poor fellow ashore."

He turned the catamaran toward the wildly shouting boy, and just then his skiff disappeared behind the reefs.

"There must be a strong tide among them 'ere reefs," remarked Tim.

Just then more frantic cries than before reached them.

"Help! Hurry—hurry—or I am lost!" was the despairing cry.

Jack started, and an anxious look crossed his face.

"He must have got into some fresh trouble!" he muttered.

He put on more power, and the Mermaid dashed ahead faster, and presently reached the reefs.

There was an opening between two of them, and heading the catamaran for it, Jack drove it through.

CHAPTER VII.

DOWN IN THE WHIRLPOOL.

As the Mermaid went around in back of the reef the divers saw that the boy's boat had capsized, and was floating away keel upwards, while the boy was swimming in the water.

He looked as if he was half exhausted and unable to bear up much longer, while to their astonishment they saw that the current had now augmented its strength so much that it was carrying him along with it with extraordinary velocity.

The dull, gurgling noise they had at first heard now roared with a deafening sound, and they felt the Mermaid go sweeping along with great speed, caught by the same current that grasped the boy.

This strange tide ran into a large opening in the face of one of the reefs, and the boy was being carried rapidly toward it, when his body suddenly sank from sight.

A despairing cry pealed from his lips.

They watched for him to reappear, but he did not come up.

"He is drowned," said Jack pityingly.

"Poor little chap," muttered Tim.

"Can't we do for him?" queried Fritz in anxious tones.

"No; his body by this time must be swept into yonder opening in the reef," replied Jack, pointing ahead, "and we couldn't find it."

"Aye," said Tim, "an' in one minute we'll be in thar, too, lad."

"Turn the boat aside!" exclaimed Jack. "Get her out of this current."

"I can't—ther current is holdin' it like fury."

"Dot dunder comes oudt of dot hole in de reef, too," said Fritz.

"That's strange; the current must be awful strong, Tim."

"Aye, lad, it is. If I turn ther Mermaid she sweeps along sideways, an' 'll bang again ther reef. Better ter go on bow first, an' go through ther openin', fer ther current, o' course, won't come out on ther other side somewheres."

"Very well," assented Jack.

Tim straightened the boat to the current, and it shot ahead with amazing force again, straight toward the hole in the reef.

A moment afterward it plunged in, bow foremost, and Jack looked around in the gloom, and exclaimed after a moment:

"I don't see any outlet for the current, boys."

"Dash it, that's queer!" said the perplexed Tim.

"Wait, and I strike a light," said Fritz, turning on the electric lights.

They dispelled the gloom, but showed no outlet.

Such a fearful roar of continuous thunder filled the big cavern into which they had now plunged that they were nearly deafened.

The water was lashed to foam, and they saw it go whirling around in a vast wheel, with a funnel-shaped opening in the center.

"It's a whirlpool!" exclaimed Jack, utterly aghast.

Caught in the irresistible current, the catamaran now went gyrating around with long sweeps in a circle.

The entire interior of the reef was hollow, and not a ray of daylight penetrated the vast water cavern.

"We must try to get out to the entrance again!" shouted Jack, to make himself heard. "Don't you feel how the whirlpool is sucking us down in its vortex?"

The boat was still sweeping around, but the circles were rapidly narrowing, as the catamaran was steadily drawn toward the center of the raging, foamy waters.

"I'll do ther best I kin, lad," replied Tim, turning pale, for he saw that the power of the current was far stronger than that of the boat, despite the strength of its flying propellers.

He turned on full speed and steered the Mermaid for the opening into which they had been dashed, but the boat could not diverge from the course which the water regulated any more than to present a broadside to the tide, and continue going around in that direction.

"Shiminey!" gasped Fritz, who was looking on with distended eyes. "Dot vhas awful! She don't been able to do dot!"

He told the truth.

Tim's rugged face was, as white as a sheet now, and he turned despairingly to Jack and groaned:

"'Tain't no use, lad; we can't get out!"

"Very well, then," coolly answered the inventor. "We will stay in here, then. Don't despair. See all the water that comes in here? It don't fill up the cavern. Consequently it has an outlet. We must go out with it if there is any possibility of doing so."

"Aye, but d'yer mean to go down in the whirlpool?"

"If we don't go voluntarily the current will suck the boat down, anyway," replied Jack undauntedly. "Let's take the devil by the horns. It may grind us to pieces, but there is no alternative."

"Werry good, an' may ther Lord help us poor sinners!" cried Tim.

"Fritz, is everything closed up?"

"Yah!" replied the young Dutchman, after an inspection.

Jack looked at the indicators on the switchboard, and saw that not a great deal of air was registered as being in the boat, yet there was enough to last about seventy hours.

He then took the wheel.

The fast-narrowing current by this time had almost pulled the Mermaid within its revolving axis, when Jack sunk the boat straight into it, the bow going down at an abrupt angle.

Down she shot, and then began to spin around, and glancing out the window the alarmed trio saw that the water all around them was boiling, bubbling and foaming with the excessive agitation of its rapid descent and great volume.

Down, down, down they were plunged in the seething mass, unable, despite the lights, to see where they were going, their nerves on edge with expectation of momentarily striking a hard bottom or projecting rock.

The time, although but minutes, seemed years of anxious suspense, and then there came a feeling as if they were going straight through the earth.

Each of the trio were clinging to the supports nearest to them, for to let go meant being thrown down.

Had there been a solitary article within the boat that was not stationary, it would have been broken or else might have crashed through the glass and filled the boat with water.

But Jack had been taught by former experience to be careful not to leave anything unfastened, and therefore suffered no injury.

Suddenly, and without warning, there came a change, for the tunnel into which they had been plunged now began to have more of a slant, and presently ran along so that the boat was enabled to float upon level keels again.

The three friends felt a deep sense of relief.

Moreover, the fearful din created by the whirlpool was fast dying away in the distance, and although it left their ears ringing they could hear each other talk.

The boat was flying along at a greater speed than she was capable of being driven by her own machinery, and as Jack glanced at the patent log gauge, he saw that they were tearing through the tunnel at the fearful speed of over fifty miles an hour!

Presently the water became clearer, too, and as the brilliant light of the electricity penetrated the water they saw that the tunnel they were in was at least fifty feet wide and equally as high.

The sides, floor and roof were necessarily worn as smooth as glass by the swift current, and as mile after mile was covered, they noticed that their speed kept steadily diminishing.

Several hours thus passed by, and by keeping hold of the wheel, Jack kept the boat steady and straight in the middle of the tunnel.

"By jingo! will we ever get out of this place?" he exclaimed.

"Thar must be an outlet somewheres!" vaguely suggested Tim.

"I subbose dot ve vhas on de vay to Shina," said Fritz.

"If we are encased within a submarine reef it must be as great a marvel as the barrier reef on the northeast coast of Australia," said Jack; "and there can be no doubt but what it is some such a formation, for you can see for yourselves that the walls are made of rock, coral or something similar."

"Vot direction ve vhas going by?" queried Fritz.

"Southwest," replied Jack, looking at the compass. "We have been traveling five hours now at the rate of fifty miles an hour, and the result is, as we are driving straight under the Gulf of Mexico, that we are two hundred and fifty miles from Florida."

"That'd bring us about in ther Channel o' Yucatan, off Cape San Antonio, on ther west coast o' Cuby," said Tim.

"And if we keep straight ahead we will come out in the Bay of Honduras," added Jack, "in northern Central America. I am not surprised at finding such a channel here under water, for this neighborhood is volcanic. Only one thing troubles me."

"An 'wot may that be?" anxiously asked the old salt.

"If we come out of this channel in very deep water, say one or two thousand feet under the gulf, the enormous pressure will be so great that the boat will instantly be crushed as flat as a pancake, and we will perish like a flash!"

This fearful, unthought-of possibility frightened Tim and Fritz, and glum looks stole over their faces at the prospect.

"Vot's to be done vonct?" queried the Dutch boy, helplessly.

"Nothing," replied Jack. "Our fate is in the hands of a higher power than our own. See, the current is now almost gone, and we are merely advancing now by our own power."

They glanced out and saw that he was not mistaken.

But they saw something else and cried out with fear.

"Looker thar, Jack, looker thar, lad!" cried Tim, in horror, as he pointed ahead and bent a despairing glance at the boy.

A chill of alarm shot through the boy as he peered ahead and saw the cause of his companion's agitation.

CHAPTER VIII.

DYING FOR AIR.

Fritz and Tim had not become unnecessarily alarmed, Jack saw, for there was a solid wall shutting off the passage ahead, against which the Mermaid threatened to dash.

If once it struck, the boat might be broken to pieces.

As quick as a flash Jack stopped the boat, reversed the propellers, and the Mermaid came to a pause close to the wall.

There was no current here, but they saw that the passage abruptly bent to the left, and the length of the boat precluded the possibility of getting around into the bend.

To go back was impossible, as the whirlpool, over 250 miles back, would not give them egress, and as they had consumed nearly six hours out of the twenty hours' supply of air on hand, it seemed as if they would perish like rats in a trap!

How much longer this passage in the submarine reef under the gulf extended they had no means of ascertaining, but if, as Jack said, they emerged in very deep water, it was likely they would perish from the pressure.

"We have got to get around that bend!" exclaimed Jack, "for it must have an outlet, for the water in here is the only means by which we can hope to escape."

"Ay, lad!" groaned Tim, mournfully; "but how'll we round it?"

"We must blow the edge off with our gun!"

"I dink so, neider," said Fritz.

Jack backed the boat away from the bend, and putting a cartridge in the gun, he aimed at the corner of the bend and fired.

The projectile struck the rock, and there came a fearful agitation of the water, followed by a violent concussion.

For a few moments the water was boiling and frothy, but when it cleared, Jack saw that a huge piece had been rent from the wall he aimed at.

The broken rock was shattered to fragments that now covered the bottom of the passage.

"The opening is plenty big enough now to let the Mermaid pass through," said he to his friends, and he started the boat forward.

The catamaran passed around the bend, which sloped abruptly upward, and after an hour the boat passed out of it.

Jack glanced at the gauge and saw that it only indicated a depth of forty-two feet of water, by which he realized that they must be near land, and he sent the boat to the surface.

His surmise was correct, for they were only a few miles from the most western coast of the island of Cuba.

The surface of the sea was as smooth as glass, but the sky wore a most scowling aspect, and as Jack pointed up at it he remarked:

"There's a black squall coming from the northeast—do you see it?"

"Better go down below ag'in ter escape it," advised Tim.

Jack sent the boat down twenty feet and put on full speed.

This had hardly been done when there sounded a sudden report that rang like a pistol shot through the submarine boat, and the wheel swung to and fro in Jack's hands.

The three navigators were astounded.

"In heaven's name, what was that?" gasped Jack.

"I reckon as somethin' busted," replied Tim, in alarm.

"See here. The rudders don't work properly!"

"Vot can it be?" demanded Fritz.

"Mind the wheel and I'll see," answered the boy.

He dashed back into the engine-room and closely examined the wires, all of which he found lying in a tangled mass. They had become twisted around the rudder lines.

He saw at a glance that the support that held them in place

as a high tension had become weakened and burst from the wall, tearing out the screws and breaking part of the wood-work.

There was a speaking-tube in the room and Jack shouted through it:

"Shut off the power, Tim, quick!"

After a moment the old sailor yelled back:

"I've did it, lad; but she won't stop!"

"Here's a fix!" gasped Jack, in alarm.

"Vot's der matter?" shouted Fritz, through the tube.

"The wires have fallen, and all control over the boat is lost, as they are in contact and are tangled in the rudder lines as well."

"Wot's ter be did?" yelled Tim.

"Leave Fritz in there and you come here and help me undo them."

In came the old sailor, stumping as fast as he could, while the Mermaid continued to rush on through the water.

He uttered an exclamation of alarm when he saw in what a ruinous condition the wires were, and gasped:

"How'r we ever a-goin' ter undo them 'ere wires while they're chock full o' electricity, lad—it can't be did?"

"Put on a pair of rubber gloves. I'm afraid it will be a long job, as there are a great many wires and each one separately has got to be fastened up. Look out you don't get shocked!"

They put on the gloves, and Jack got his tools out, whereupon they began their arduous task; and presently saw that some of the rubber insulation had been broken from some of the wires, causing the current to flow from one wire into the other.

This was what caused the loss of individual power in each wire.

Several hours passed by before they finally completed their task, and in the meantime the boat had been forced to keep on in a southwesterly direction until the rudder lines were untangled from the other wires.

Finally, however, everything was in proper order again, and they returned to the pilot-house, when Fritz met them with a blanched face and a startling piece of intelligence.

"I vhas shut off de bower," said he, in frightened tones, "but by Shimminy, ve vhas got in a stronger tide as never vhas, und id holt us down here und shwept us along faster as ve nefer vent before alretty!"

Jack glanced at the lever and saw that the propellers were not working, yet the Mermaid was tearing along with appalling speed, and seemed to be getting sucked down lower in the depths.

In fact, a glance at the indicator showed that they were now sixty feet below the surface, and he saw by the way the water was rushing along that they were in a furious current.

The boy made no effort to steer the boat, but found that the pressure of the strange and powerful submarine current held the rudder blades almost as rigid as if they were bolted.

It was clearly impossible to get out of the awful current, and Jack presently came to the conclusion to grade the boat to suit it, and let it sweep them along till it became weaker, when they might have a chance to get out of it.

"We are going straight toward Honduras!" said the boy, "and if this fearful current continues to keep us swinging along at this rate much longer we are bound to run ashore!"

"Is that any danger?" queried Tim.

"None, whatever, until we get within the shore line, when we may go crashing against some sunken rocks!"

"Then vot ve do about id?" asked Fritz, pulling a long face.

"We can't do anything at present. Don't you see we can't go up, down, or right or left? If I pump all the water ballast

out of the boat the tide may keep her submerged, and the weight of the water might crush the hulls."

There was nothing for it now but to wait, and several hours more passed by, when suddenly Jack noticed a smothering sensation in the air, and glanced at one of the indicators.

"By heavens, boys!" he startled his companions with, "do you know that we failed to pump in more air while on the surface, and that there are not more than a thousand cubic feet of it left? Within less than half an hour we will use it all up, and if we don't get more we'll smother!"

"Good Lor'!" gasped Tim, with a start. "Raise the boat!"

"I can't! She won't ascend!" despairingly answered Jack.

"Und looker dere!" yelled Fritz, pointing ahead. "Vot's dot?"

"Why—we are plunging into a passage this current flows through," said Jack, as the boat went into another dark, wide tunnel.

"Ay, now," groaned Tim, "an' if yer wants ter go ter ther surface fer air, yer can't do it till we gits out o' here."

They were cooped up like rats in a trap.

A thrill of terror passed over them, and every moment the smothering feeling intensified, until at last it became so difficult to breathe that they began to suffer agony.

Along rushed the boat at a furious rate of speed.

It was useless to try to guide her now, and they let her take her course through the gloomy tunnel they were then in.

On, on, on they went, and they eagerly looked ahead for the end of it, but saw nothing; and with a gasping cry Fritz fell to the floor, laboring hard for breath.

Tim was choking.

"I—can't—stand—this—much—longer, lad!" he gasped.

"Heaven help us!" groaned Jack. "What shall I do?"

"Belay, Jack, don't yer——"

But ere poor Tim could finish the sentence he fell in a heap on the floor beside the half-senseless Dutch boy.

Jack felt faint, sick and dizzy.

He could not bear up much longer himself, but staggered back, his brain in a whirl.

"The air in the hulls!" he shrieked. "If we can get it, maybe——"

He staggered over to the levers and reached out to grasp one, when his senses began to suddenly fail him.

He fell, grasping the lever, and the boat rushed on with its insensible crew, through the dark passage, going—where?

CHAPTER IX.

THE PHANTOM SHIP.

"Fritz! Tim! Get up! get up!"

"Eh, lad? What is it? Whar am I?"

"We are saved—saved—saved!"

Tim got upon his feet, and rubbed his eyes, for sunlight was streaming in upon him, but Fritz laid like a log where he had fallen, heavily breathing, and Jack flung open a window.

The cool air rushing in revived them all, and the Dutch boy was as much amazed as the rest to find himself alive.

"But how did this happen?" demanded Tim, in amazement.

"I fainted, too," said Jack, "but I remembered the air in the hulls and opened a lever letting it come up here before my senses left me. I revived a few minutes ago, and here we were upon the surface. The Lord only knows how we got here, though."

"But where ve vhas?" queried Fritz.

"I have no idea. There's no land in sight anywhere. Tim,

it is just noon. Can't you take an observation of the sun and ascertain our position?" queried the puzzled boy.

The old sailor nodded and fulfilled this request.

He made a startling reckoning.

"Blast me!" he exclaimed, "this can't be right!"

"What is it?" queried Jack, curiously.

"'Cordin' ter my figgers we're in ther Pacific Ocean."

"In der Pacific?" skeptically asked Fritz.

"Ay, ay; an' no more'n forty miles off Gautemala!"

They all looked very much astonished, and Jack cried:

"By jingo, I see through it now!"

"Vot iss?" demanded Fritz.

"The passage we came through must have carried us under Central America from the bay of Honduras."

This suggestion was startling, but there could have been no other way for them to have got there.

"It must be that 'ere way!" said Tim.

"Then we are saved a long cruise around South America to get here," said Jack. "Our misfortune has repaid us for all the trouble we underwent. By Jove! though, it is surprising!"

"Ain't dot Mermaid hurted none?" queried Fritz.

"You had better examine her and see."

Tim and Fritz did so, but the most careful inspection failed to show the least sign of damage, and they all rejoiced.

The boat was then headed northward, high pressure put on, and several days' travel brought them to the Sandwich Islands, where they found there could be no mistake in Tim's calculation.

From there a bee-line was made for the Ladrone Islands, which they reached without adventure in due time, and following the regular course of ships, they headed northward for the coast of China, and soon brought themselves in sight of it.

"This is a dangerous location, Tim," said Jack. "The place is swarming with Malay pirates, and I expect we will have a brush with them ere many days are past."

He sat in the cabin talking to the old sailor, early in the evening.

"D'yer know it's my idee as this 'ere phantom ship o' ther Yaller Sea ain't nuthin' more'n a pirate," said Tim.

"Why do you think so?" queried the boy in surprise.

"'Cause don't that ghost ship scuttle every one as it fouls?"

"Yes—to all accounts, they are all sunk."

"And don't ther crews take ter ther boats?"

"Invariably."

"An' ain't ther Yaller Sea shallow in most places?"

"Yes."

"Then can't yer see through ther game? As soon's this 'ere phantom ship sinks a craft it wanishes. But I'll bet it comes back ag'in, an' they steals everything in the sunken ships wot can't go down in such deep water as not ter leave part of her sticks outer water showin' whar she lies."

"You intimate that divers board her?"

"Wot's more likely 'n that, as ther men along ther coast an' on these 'ere islands is all good divers?"

"That's a good theory," admitted Jack, "and it does away with the ghostly part of the business. Still, we can't form any opinion on that score until we see this apparition."

Just then there came a shout from Fritz, who stood in the pilot house steering the boat.

"Sail-ho! Sail-ho!" cried he.

"Where away?" asked Jack, running into the pilot house.

"Athwart our bow."

"What do you make her out?"

"A full-ricked ship."

"Ah, yes—there she stands, almost hull down on the horizon."

"Und she vhas goin' our vhay," said Fritz.

"Sure enough. Increase our speed to thirty knots."

"Vhas ve goin' to owerhaul dot?" asked Fritz, complying.

"Yes," replied Jack, watching the catamaran darting ahead over the rolling swell. "She looks like an american freighter to me, and if she is going to Canton, she may offer us an example of this ghostly ship's prowess. At any rate, we can find out soon."

Tim had followed him in, and now pointed ahead to the right, and exclaimed:

"There's the headland o' Nippon islan' now."

"Then Formosa must be off to the port there?"

"Aye, lad, aye. I know this place precious well, 'cause I've cruised these 'ere waters in years gone by when yer couldn't sail fifty fathoms in any direction without runnin' inter Chinese junks loaded down ter ther water's edge wi' pirates."

"Och, gif us a rest!" growled Fritz in disgust. "You make me fatigued."

Tim grinned, and the boat rapidly overhauled the ship.

Upon a nearer approach they found it to be a full-rigged ship of about eight hundred tons, named the Mary Scott.

As Fritz ran the Mermaid up alongside of her, Jack went out of a door upon the deck and gave the watch a hail.

"Ship ahoy!"

His voice was unexpected and created great excitement on board, as no one had seen the silent approach of the catamaran.

Every one of the watch on deck rushed to the side and peered over the bulwarks down upon the Mermaid.

"Boat ahoy!" came the answering cry.

"Fling me a line. I want to board your craft," said Jack.

"Where do you hail from, and where are you bound?"

"New York, and we are going to the Yellow Sea."

"Stand by, and we'll heave you a tow line."

"All ready," cried Jack.

One of the sailors had a line coiled in his hand, and he flung it for the Mermaid with unerring precision.

Jack caught the rope, and made the end fast to a stanchion, when Fritz ran the catamaran in under the ship's stern, and as soon as the hawser was made fast to the vessel an accommodation ladder was let down over the taffrail.

The boy ascended it to the deck of the ship.

By this time the officer of the watch had summoned the captain, and as soon as Jack set foot on the deck of the Mary Scott he was met by the skipper.

There was a look of curiosity upon the officer's face, and as he saluted the young diver, he exclaimed:

"Well, this is a surprise! Do you mean to say you have traveled all the way here from New York in that little boat?"

"Yes, sir. It is a submarine torpedo boat," replied the boy.

"Oh!" said Captain Bunsby, the skipper, as he introduced himself and learned Jack's name, "that accounts for it. I've heard of you in the newspapers. Therefore I'm not surprised. It pleases me to know you, Jack Wright. But what in thunder are you doing in this out-of-the-way spot on the ocean with your boat, may I ask?"

"I am deputed by the Government to scour the Yellow Sea in search of the phantom ship which has caused our merchant marine so much trouble," replied the boy, "and I have come aboard to learn whether you know anything about that singular craft or not?"

A grave expression crossed the skipper's rugged face.

"Yes," he exclaimed emphatically, "it is no myth, I'll swear to that. For I've seen it run into a ship and sink it; then it vanished as if it had been swallowed up by the sea."

"And what does this spectral vessel look like?"

"A cloud—a white vision—a full-rigged ship, not unlike this one, and its outlines are apparently transparent."

"Are you bound for China?"

"I am going to Canton and Hong Kong."

"Then perhaps we may encounter this mysterious——"

"Ship ahoy!" yelled the lookout just then, interrupting him.

"Where away?" demanded the captain, looking around.

A chorus of yells arose from the crew at this juncture, and Jack gave a violent start just then himself.

"The phantom ship!" yelled one of the watch.

Every one was gazing off to the windward in speechless horror, and there beheld a large, spectral vessel of pure white gliding across the sea, clearly outlined against the darkening sky.

It glided along with a slow but stately motion, and then swung off toward the Mary Scott, caught the wind free, and then shot ahead like an arrow as if it would run the ship down.

CHAPTER X.

THE CHINESE PIRATE.

Every one was held spellbound by the sight of the phantom ship, for they expected that it would keep up its reputation and run them down, sinking them on the spot.

The spectral-looking vessel kept on a short distance, and then suddenly seemed to collapse and disappear.

That broke the enchantment holding everybody.

Sighs of intense relief burst involuntarily from every man.

"It's gone!" was the cry that ran from lip to lip.

The skipper clutched Jack excitedly by the arm.

"Did you see it?" he cried hoarsely.

"Yes," replied the boy, who was very much surprised.

"Now do you doubt its existence?"

"No. I am convinced."

"Isn't it as ghostly as anything you ever saw?"

"I must admit that it is," replied Jack, and he did not marvel at the superstitious fear of the men.

He peered ahead at the spot where the strange vessel had vanished, and saw nothing but the heaving waves and a low wall of mist, common in those latitudes, hovering over the water; but the wind soon whirled it away.

Jack was puzzled.

He was not superstitious, yet he had just seen the nearest semblance to a supernatural agency he had ever heard of.

How could it practically be accounted for?

"See here?" said Captain Bunsby, in troubled tones.

"What do you want?" queried the boy.

"Do you know what our view of the spectre means?"

"No."

"Well, I do. It's an omen of bad luck."

"Nonsense."

"Oh, you'll see. It means disaster for us, as sure as fate."

"Why do you think so?"

"There was never a ship's crew yet in these accursed haunted waters that saw the phantom ship approaching but what some direful misfortune befell them ere their cruise was over."

"You mean that the phantom appears as a forewarning that it is liable to run them down at any moment?"

"Exactly so. We have been warned. Let us now beware. I am sure we are doomed. Death stares us squarely in the face. I did not want to make this trip for the ship owners. I felt an apprehension that we'd get into trouble. Now, you see, I was not wrong in my calculation. But they pool-pooled and teared, and laughed me to such scorn that in sheer desperation their threats drove me to venture over the Pacific for a few barrels of tea and coffee, when my freight is discharged."

"My dear friend, do you forget my mission here?" asked

Jack, with a smile. "Recollect that I am going to accompany you as a bodyguard, and shall let no harm befall you."

The skipper shook his head dubiously.

"Pleasant as your assurance is," said he, "it don't rid me of my terror. I shall expect nothing now but the loss of my ship."

"We shall see," grimly replied Jack. "Where are you going first?"

"To Shanghai."

"Very well. Sail ahead. We shall follow you. Have no fear," and so saying Jack returned to his own boat, and they cast off the hawser and drifted astern of the Mary Scott.

"Did you see the phantom ship, boys?" queried Jack of his messmates, when he joined them in the pilot house.

"No," replied Tim and Fritz in chorus.

The boy thereupon told them about it, causing his friends the utmost astonishment, and then added:

"As I am convinced that there is something in this, I am sure we'll have our hands full capturing it."

"Capturin' it?" echoed Tim. "Why, blast it, lad, how are yer a-goin' ter capture a spook, I'd like ter know?"

"My dear fellow," replied the boy, "it wasn't a ghost. I don't believe in such things. It certainly had a spectral look; but appearances are deceitful sometimes. In fact, if it was not an optical delusion, I am convinced that this spirit ship is very material."

Fritz passed no opinion, and they let the matter drop.

The night passed away without any signs of the strange ship, and our friends kept an even distance between themselves and the Mary Scott, which, by daybreak, reached the entrance to the Yellow Sea.

Jack had sunk the Mermaid below the water until nothing but the upper part of her wheel-house protruded above the waves.

She was therefore invisible to the crew of the Mary Scott, although our friends could plainly see the big ship.

An early breakfast was partaken of, and just as the gray dawn was breaking before the rise of the big red sun, Jack descried a sail putting out from the Chinese coast.

Tim and Fritz were in the pilot-house with him, and the old sailor leveled a binocular at the approaching sail, and said:

"It's a big junk, Jack."

"Heading toward the Mary Scott?"

"Aye, lad; an' there's only a cupful of wind they're rowin' in."

"Can you see the Mongolian's crew?"

"Plainly—an' keelhaul me if thar ain't scores o' them!"

"Armed?"

"To ther teeth."

"Depend upon it, then, it's a Chinese pirate."

"Jest my idee."

"Fritz, put a cartridge in the gun."

"Yah!" replied the Dutch boy, obeying.

The ship was about one mile in advance of the catamaran, and the junk an equal distance beyond.

It was a vessel of large dimensions, with a high fore-castle and poopdeck, with three masts and bat-wing sails, while between decks were rows of open portholes from which protruded the muzzles of some heavy calibre, old-fashioned guns.

The crew had got out some long sweeps, with which they were propelling the chumsy craft along, as the wind scarcely bulged the sails, and the divers saw that there was a suspiciously large crew on board, all of whom were watching the Mary Scott.

Indeed, all doubt about the character of the junk was soon set at rest, when there came a discharge of a gun from

its upper deck, and a ball went flying across the water toward the American ship, and passed clear over it.

"That settles it," said Jack. "She's a pirate!"

"Haven't dem Yankees got some cannons vonct?" asked Fritz.

"Nothing but a little, old brass salute-gun."

"Den if ve vhasn'd here alretty, dem Shinamans vhas plow dem all mit pieces somedimes, don'd id?"

"We will give the beggars a surprise," said Jack. "Luff up, Fritz, until I get a sight on the gun, and raise her to the surface."

Fritz brought the bow around, and setting the pumps in motion, he raised the catamaran to the top.

Jack then aimed the pneumatic gun at the pirate.

"Watch the junk!" he exclaimed. "With one shot I'll destroy her!"

"Hurry up, lad. She's almost up in cable's length o' her," said Tim excitedly, "an' they're preparin' ter fire another shot."

Having properly gauged the gun, Jack turned a lever to discharge it.

But no discharge followed.

A blank look crossed the boy's face, and he gasped:

"Why, what's the matter? It was good for one hundred shots."

"Listen—vot's dot noise?" queried Fritz.

They heard a low, sibilant hiss coming from the gun.

Jack closely examined the gun, and gave a start.

"The air reservoirs are leaking!" he exclaimed in disgust, "and all the power is gone. The gun is useless now until we can repair it. This is too bad—too bad!"

"Vat yer vhas goin' ter do abond id?" anxiously asked the pugnacious Fritz. "Don'd yer see dot shunk vhas glose up by dot Mary Scott alretty. Holy Moses, Shack! vhas ve got to stay here und led 'em got der best uf dot fight mitoudt toing somedings?"

"There is only one way for us to act now, boys."

"How?" eagerly demanded Tim.

"Go below and plant a torpedo under the pirate."

"Aye, aye! Down we goes, then, lad," said the old sailor quickly. "Who's goin' to fasten ther torpedo?"

"I'll do it," said Jack. "Bring us under the junk—quick!"

The old sailor sunk the catamaran twenty feet, and turning on all the electric lights, he started the boat ahead.

Jack, in the meantime, hastened back into the storeroom, and hastily attired himself in a diving suit of aluminum, upon the back of which was strapped a reservoir of air.

On top of the helmet was an electric light, supplied from a battery he carried on the knapsack; in his belt he carried an electric knife and revolver, and from a locker he took a long brass cartridge, with a sharp spike on one end and a binding-post on the other.

He then entered a small closet at the extreme end of the boat, shut the water-tight door and opened the sea-door, letting in the water.

He then stepped out on the deck that encircled the deck-houses, and fastening a copper wire to the torpedo binding-post, he went up forward and fastened the other end of the wire to a binding-post on the front of the pilot-house.

A moment later the boy saw the hull of the junk floating overhead, and Tim sent the Mermaid up toward it.

CHAPTER XI.

A COMBAT WITH A SAW-FISH.

Jack had invented metallic discs in the helmets of the diving suits, similar to those used for telephones, by which he could

speak and hear much the same as if he wore no suit at all under water.

One of the window-panes of the pilot-house was also furnished with one of these ingenious contrivances, and as soon as the boat darted up toward the hull of the junk, by the use of the propellers astern, the boy shouted to Tim:

"As soon as I fasten the cartridge, back her away fifty yards."

"Werry good!" assented the old sailor, stopping the Mermaid.

She came to a pause directly beneath the junk.

"Don't touch lever No. 7 till I give you the order," warned the boy, "or you may explode the cartridge in my hand."

"I won't," replied Tim. "Can yer reach her keel?"

"Easily," assented the boy, sticking the spike of the torpedo in the hull of the junk. "Now back away, Tim, as fast as possible."

The old marine obeyed.

Jack paid out the insulated copper wire as fast as the Mermaid recoiled, and when they were at a safe distance the boy yelled:

"Now—turn the lever!"

"Ay, ay!" came Tim's reply. "Look out—here she goes!"

He turned the lever—a current of electricity flashed over the wire to the torpedo and there sounded a fearful explosion as the cartridge burst beneath the Chinese boat.

In an instant the junk was blown to pieces, and the violently agitated water made the catamaran spin like a top.

"Up to the surface with you!" cried Jack.

"Ay, ay!" cheerily replied Tim.

The water was pumped from the hulls and the boat ascended.

As soon as it emerged they found themselves close to the Mary Scott, but nothing was left of the junk but a mass of floating timbers, to some of which a few of the pirates were clinging.

The crew of the American ship were amazed at the sudden destruction of the junk, for the Chinamen had been on the point of grappelling the ship to board it when it was blown up.

But the moment they saw the Mermaid emerge from the waves they understood what occasioned the surprise, and uttered a wild cheer that amply expressed their gratitude to our friends.

Jack stood upon the forward deck, and grasping the railing, shouted:

"Were any of you injured by the explosion?"

"Not a soul!" replied Captain Bunsby. "Did you blow her up?"

"Of course. I hope you have confidence in us now?"

"More than I had before," admitted the skipper.

"Belay thar, Jack!" roared Tim, just then. "The fellers wot wuz hangin' on them planks is a-bordin' us on all sides!"

The boy glanced around and saw that several of the pirates who were left had gained the low-lying decks of the Mermaid.

Others were swimming up to follow them, and it soon looked as if the entire remainder would get upon the catamaran.

"Back with you!" shouted the boy. "We don't want such vile cut-throats upon this craft!"

He sprang toward them, but drawing the long knives they carried the desperate pirates rushed to meet him.

Jack pulled out his pistol and fired at them.

No report came from the electric weapon, but the moment the bullets struck the bodies of those he hit they exploded inside the rascals and blew them to pieces.

Undaunted and desperate, however, the yellow-skinned wretches who escaped getting shot, pressed on, and a huge fellow reached the boy and aimed a thrust at him with his knife.

Jack had used up every shot in the pistol, but parrying the

blow with the weapon he turned it aside, knocked it from the assailant's hand and grappled with him.

A fearful struggle then ensued, and several more of the pirates rushed to their companion's assistance. Jack dragged the big fellow to the edge of the deck and attempted to push him off.

The Chinaman fell from the boat down into the water, but he dragged the boy with him, and the leaden weights strapped on Jack's breast and back at once sunk them, clasped in a tight embrace.

Down they shot like a ton of iron.

They were very likely in a place where the sea was very deep and the boy realized in a flash that his weighted suit would carry them to the bottom when both would certainly expire.

He flung out one hand and felt it grazing something.

Instinctively his fingers closed upon it and he felt a thrill of joy pass over him when he found that it was the electric wire by which the torpedo was exploded that blew up the junk.

Jack clung to it with all his strength and the Chinaman hung on to him for a few moments.

The rascal was fast strangling, however, and at last let go and sank down lower out of the boy's sight.

Released of his drowning opponent, Jack caught hold of the wire with both hands and began to hoist himself up toward the surface again, when to his dismay he found that the boat was descending.

In his alarm over Jack's protracted absence below, Tim had sunk the catamaran, leaving the Chinamen who had been on deck struggling upon the surface.

Down came the boat, faster than Jack could climb up the wire, and the fear flashed across the boy's mind that he would be carried down to a depth of more than three hundred feet.

If he was, the pressure of water would certainly kill him.

"Tim! Tim!" he yelled at the top of his voice. "Stop the boat!"

But the old sailor evidently did not hear him for the boat continued its rapid descent.

It reached a depth of two hundred feet, and Jack's alarm increased, and he hurried his ascent as fast as he could go.

Water is a good conductor of sound, and the boy shouted again:

"Stop the boat! Tim, stop the boat!"

This time he was evidently more successful, for the Mermaid came to a sudden pause, and he heard Tim roar:

"Whar are ye, lad, whar are ye?"

"Below the Mermaid!"

"Shall I lower her more?"

"No, no; I'll come up to you!"

"All right, my hearty!"

Up climbed the boy as fast as he could go, and presently he reached the deck, panting and exhausted, in plain view of his friends, who were peering out of the pilot-house windows.

They saw at once, then, where he had been.

"A little more and you would have killed me!" exclaimed Jack.

"Lor' A'mighty!" groaned Tim. "Whar's ther Chinaman?"

"Drowned, thank heaven!"

"Air ye a-comin' inside?"

"Yes. Hold on a moment!"

As Jack spoke he walked along the deck on the port side, and had just reached the midship section, when a huge, dark body came shooting from the darkness beyond, and dashing head foremost into the brilliant halo of light, it struck the side of the cabin and recoiled.

The boy glanced at the monster in surprise, and then a thrill of alarm passed over him.

"What now, lad?" he gasped. "And the vicious creature may

dash its ugly saw through one of the windows, break the glass and fill the boat with water!"

The fish had come to a pause a few yards distant.

It looked very much like a shark, except that its snout was elongated into a flat, bony saw, armed on each edge with about twenty large, bony spines or teeth.

The monster was fully eighteen feet long, and had made an effort to drive the formidable weapon at its snout into the Mermaid, as they sometimes plunge them into hulls of ships.

Jack saw it fix its ugly little eyes upon him, and dreading an encounter with the monster, he glided hastily toward the stern to get within the boat out of harm's way, for if once that terrible sword should strike him it would either impale and kill, or it would knock him down into the depths again.

He had hardly taken two strides, however, when the fish shot at him like a flash of lightning.

There could be no doubt of its intentions; its attack was directed at him, and he let himself drop upon the deck with surprising suddenness, and pulled out his electric knife.

No sooner was he down when the saw-fish flashed by over his head like a meteor, and struck the cabin again.

Up went Jack's hand with his weapon, and touching a spring he caused the long blade to shoot out of the knife-handle and plunge into the fish, laden with an electric current.

It gave the leviathan a terrible gash and a powerful shock, causing a convulsive tremor to shoot through it.

The spasm caused the fish to squirm, bending itself in two and its tail struck the boy a violent blow.

He was knocked spinning to the edge of the deck and fell over, as the fish plunged away; but flinging out his hands, letting his knife fall, and grasping the railing, he saved himself from a fall down into the gulf below.

Within a minute the fish turned to renew the attack.

Jack was now weaponless.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE YELLOW SEA.

"Help! Help!"

"Shack! Vere vhas you?"

"On the port deck! Look out for the saw-fish!"

"Donner und blitzen! Vat kind of a t'ing you vhas gall dot?"

Fritz, arrayed in a diving suit, had come out to Jack's assistance when he heard the boy's cry, and just as he came around to the stern he saw the boy hanging to the railing.

Hardly had he seen this sight when the saw-fish whizzed by, and one of its spasmodic throes flung the enormous body against Fritz with such violence that the Dutch boy was slammed up against the deck-house, yelling for help.

Jack pulled himself up on the deck again.

"Have you got a pistol?" he gasped.

"Yah! Shiminey Christmas, dot vhas proken mine neck!" groaned Fritz, handing Jack the weapon. "Go for dot son-of-a-gun, und plow him all by pieces! Vot you t'ink—I'm made of galvanized iron? Och, donner-vetter! Vere id vvas gone by itselluf?"

The saw-fish had vanished beyond the halo of light.

"It is gone! Get inside while we have the chance!"

"Vot iss? Go in—me! Nefer! Gief me a axe till I baralyze id!"

"Hurry up—go on! Don't you run any chances with saw-fish. They tackle whales sometimes, let alone Dutchmen, and seldom fail to kill their prey!"

"I don't been afraid even if id vhas a hammer-fish, or a plate fish, or a—och! here id comes back now!" and with a

rush Fritz made for the door, appalled at the size of the monster.

Jack laughed grimly.

"His spunk is all gone!" he muttered.

Then he aimed at the oncoming leviathan and fired.

The ball sped true to its mark and exploded, blowing a great hole in the saw-fish, from whence its life's blood flowed.

Attracted by the smell of the blood, a shark suddenly appeared in sight, and in its turn was followed by several more of the cannibals of the deep.

They darted at the yet living saw-fish and turning over on their backs, seized the quivering flesh in their rapacious jaws, tore it to pieces, and voraciously devoured it!

In the midst of the cannibalistic feast, Jack and Fritz went inside of the boat again, and, closing the sea-door, they started a pump, emptying the closet of the water it contained.

They then ascended several steps and entered the dynamo-room where they took off their diving suits.

Joining Tim in the pilot-house they found the old sailor sending the boat to the surface, where they presently emerged.

By that time the Mary Scott was a mile or more away and they let her keep her lead, while the rest of the survivors of the blown-up junk had been drowned.

The breeze freshened as the day advanced, and the American ship passed on into the Yellow Sea, between the islands of Majicosima and Napakiang, in the Loo Choo group, toward nightfall.

"We are going to have ugly weather to-night, I'm afraid," said Jack as he pointed up at the dark, gloomy sky, "and it is five hundred miles from here to Shanghai, where the Mary Scott intends to stop first, before she goes south through the Strait of Formosa to Hong Kong and Canton."

"Ay, but the Mermaid can weather it easy, lad, so what need we care?" asked Tim. "Thar ain't nuthin' to skeer us, an'——"

"But you forget that the phantom ship most always appears when the weather is muggy, according to the reports we got," said Jack, "and it behooves us to keep a lookout for her in this storm, much sharper than if the moon and stars were shining."

"Den ve don't vant dem 'lectric lights all purnin'," said Fritz, shutting off the glaring effulgence, "or dem ghostesses vill see us alretty."

"We had better all remain up to-night," said Jack, as he began to mend the leak in the alr reservolr in the pneumatic gun. "I have a feeling as if we were going to be kept active to-night."

"I'm willin' fer one," said Tim, taking a chew of navy plug as he clung with one hand to the wheel and fixed the glare of his glass eye ahead with his good optic. "How 'bout you, Fritz?"

"Vell, so long as I got me mine accordion to keep me awake——"

"Wot!" roared Tim, with a start, for he hated this instrument with an undying aversion, "ha' ye got that ole rattle-trap wi' yer?"

"I dink so," grinned Fritz, as he lifted the wheezing music box from behind a chair, and began to grind out the melancholy tune of "Sweet Violets," in a droaning fashion. "Vot you t'ink—dot I go mltoud dot t'ing on dis drip alretty vonet?"

"Stop it!" howled Tim, frantically. "Goldurn yer ugly figgerhead, yer know werry well as I feel my brain turnin' wi' that thing playin'."

"Och, got oudt," said Fritz, with a chuckle of fiendish glee, as he continued the mournful dirge. "You vhas subbose dot a vooden-legged, ret-nosed, bandy-eyed oldt chicken like you vhas made me gief up mine peautiful moosic. Vell, I shouldt laugh vonet."

A desperate look came over Tim's face, for he dared not

leave the wheel for a moment to wreak vengeance upon his tormentor.

"Whiskers!" he howled, banging the floor with his wooden peg.

His little red monkey came hopping up to him from an obscure corner, chattering and blinking as if in a rage.

"Whiskers," said Tim, "didn't I teach yer ter tear every hair outer ther head o' a dummy accordeen player when we wuz ashore?"

The monkey chattered, and scratched himself, looking up at Tim's face.

"Aye, lad, yer understan's me, don't yer? Now, thar's a flabbergasted, pot-bellied, moon-faced, Dutch galoot ower thar, an' ther word o' command I larned ye wuz: rake him! Rake him from stem ter starn, lad!"

Whiskers evidently understood the word of command.

For with a howl like a rusty steam whistle and a hop that carried him through the air like a balloon, he landed up on the grinning Fritz's shoulders, buried his fingers in the Dutch boy's yellow hair, and began to yank.

Fritz stopped playing, and his grin vanished.

"Murder!" he bawled, springing madly to his feet. "Och! Och! Och! Le' go of mine hair! Holy shumpin' Sherusalem! You vhas made me baldheated alretty onct! Oh, le' go, I dolt yer, or——"

He dropped his accordeon and began to dance with agony.

Whiskers pulled and tugged and jerked with all his might at Fritz's yellow locks, and as he failed to get as much hair cut as he thought proper, he began to bite it off in chunks.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tim delightedly, and he nearly doubled up with mirth. "Go fer him, Whiskers, gol durn yer hide! Rip ther hull top-knot off o' ther parrot-toed lubber! Rake him! Rake him, an', by gum, I'll—— Ha! there he goes!"

"I vhas murder yer mit a poker!" yelled Fritz, frantically, trying to dislodge the delighted monkey, and getting his finger bit for his pains; and he ran head-first against the door.

Whiskers got a whack that nearly collapsed him, and Fritz saw stars for a moment, as he plunged head-first into the cabin and disappeared in a heap under the table.

Tim roared louder, and while Whiskers dashed away, disgusted with his defeat, Fritz came back with a bar of iron, and offered to brain Tim for a glass of lager and a pretzel.

As the old sailor did not bribe him to do it, and Jack grumbled at them for carrying their pranks too far, there was a cessation put upon hostilities, and peace was restored.

The water into which the catamaran had forged now was as yellow as saffron and very shallow.

There could be no mistake of their location now.

Ahead of them the Mary Scott was forging on under shortened sails, for the breeze was increasing to a gale as the sky grew darker and muttering thunder rolled angrily in the distance.

"We had better shorten the distance between the ship and the Mermaid," said Jack, "for in this gathering gloom we may lose sight of her lights. Put on more speed and close the gap, Tim."

This was done, and when they were within quarter of a mile of the ship speed was reduced to correspond with the ship's.

Half an hour thus passed by, the thunder rolling nearer each moment, and brilliant flashes of lightning zig-zagged across the sky.

The waves, driven before a furious gale, had arisen to great yellow billows and breakers, and rain beat down.

Jack did not have a light on his boat.

He left Tim in charge of the wheel, and peered out of the window, when an unusually brilliant flash of lightning tore through the murky vault of heaven, and he uttered a startled cry.

"Look there, Tim!" he gasped, pointing ahead in the gloom.
 "Good Lord, that phantom ship!"
 "Aye, and under a full head of sail in this roaring gale, and bearing down upon the Mary Scott full tilt."
 "Thank my tin-fables, it's all up with them, then!"
 "Not if I can help it, my boy."
 "Will you yet do, Jack?"
 "Hush her out of the water!" emphatically said the boy.
 "I'll soon prove whether that ship is material or spectral."
 He started the searchlight, and flashed its glaring rays upon the phantom ship, which was then less than a mile away.
 "Too sighting the already loaded gun he turned the lever.
 The shot was noisily discharged, and went screaming on its way across the heaving waves toward the ghostly ship.
 Jack sprang to the window and eagerly peered out to watch the effect.

CHAPTER XIII.

INTO A SOLID WALL OF ROCK.

Fritz and Tim were as much excited as Jack was, and kept their glances riveted upon the phantom ship.

Only a short interval passed, when suddenly one of the masts of the spectre was seen to disappear.

"Hurrah!" yelled Jack. "I struck her."

"Sure enough!" assented Tim.

"I tort dot bullet would flew troo it mitout broken something," said Fritz, disappointedly. "Ain't dot de vay ghostesses acts vonct?"

"That's their reputation among superstitious people," laughed Jack: "but this phantom seems to be too substantial to withstand a shot from my gun, for I've blown one of its masts away."

"Keel haul me," gasped Tim, "if it ain't runnin' away!"

"So it is," said Jack: "and her mainmast is gone, too."

"Dot vhas a funny kind of a ghost ship!" said Fritz.

"I'll follow the rascal!" said Jack suddenly.

"Wot! Run down a goblin craft?" asked Tim, somewhat alarmed.

"Of course! If I can do her so much damage, why not more?"

"Aye, now; but I don't want no closer acquaintance, I don't."

"Bah! Come about, quick! She's a wonderfully fast sailer, and may fade out of sight in this—ha! she's gone now!"

Just as Tim timidly turned the catamaran to follow the white, transparent ship, it suddenly faded away.

It was out of sight in a twinkling.

The three adventurers gazed at each other in wonderment. What had become of the phantom ship?

That was what puzzled them.

"By thunder!" ripped from Tim's lips.

"Och, Gott!" ejaculated Fritz, looking very solemn.

For several moments none of them spoke, but Jack finally turned away, and they saw that his face was very pale.

"Change your course, Tim!" said he briefly.

"Are yer a-goin' ter give up ther chase?"

"I freely acknowledge that I am fairly beaten—puzzled—mystified!"

"And me, too," said Fritz, his eyes as big as saucers.

They scanned the surface of the sea in the direction where the phantom ship had been riding, but saw nothing but the yellow, heaving water, and when the lightning came and flamed over the scene, still nothing was revealed.

Out to the windward the Mary Scott was plunging along with a storm stayvial set forward and a balance reefed

spanker aft; all the crew were crowded to the bulwarks, gazing in the direction where the phantom ship had last been seen.

It was evident that the mysterious vessel had been observed by the American crew, and that they were yet looking for it.

Tim shut off the searchlight.

"Despite the fact that I carried away one of her masts with its sails and rigging," said Jack, "it is mysterious to me how that goblin-craft could carry such a full head of sail as it did in such a fierce gale as is blowing now."

"Aye," answered Tim, "thar's wind enough a-blowin' ter tear ther stoutest canvas inter ribbons, and blow it out o' its bolt rope. 'Sides that 'ere, how d'ye account fer 'em bein' so transparent as ter see through 'em when ther lightning wuz a-flashin' on t'other side o' ther phantom ship, ther same's if no sails wuz thar?"

"Dot vhas der mystery," said Fritz.

"Then, ag'in," said Tim, warming up to his subject, "wot became o' ther phantom ship when it vanished so sudden? Did it go down inter Davy Jones' locker, never ter rise no more, or did it jest melt inter air an' float away?"

"You've got me again," said Jack.

"Now, what be yer a-goin' ter do—foller ther Mary Scott?"

"I can see no other course to follow, for——"

"Py shingo!" interrupted Fritz in startled tones. "Looker! Looker!"

He was excitedly pointing off to the sea, and they followed the direction he indicated with their glances.

The phantom ship had suddenly appeared in view again, although where it came from they could not imagine.

It simply flashed up, and there it was, riding the surging billows, its graceful outlines wearing a pale, ghostly light, much as if every plank, spar, mast, sail and rope were made of a faint phosphorescent light, which was strongly outlined against the gloom.

The mainmast was yet missing, but the strange vessel glided over the raging billows with extreme grace and ease.

Instead of going toward the Mary Scott, now it was sailing away from her, its luminous outlines clearly defined against the dull darkness, which now enshrouded everything.

"Well, this is the queerest and most uncanny thing I ever heard of!" ejaculated Jack, his eyes opening wide with astonishment.

The lightning kept playing incessantly, and Tim exclaimed:

"Shiver me, lads, but ha' ye obsarved as thar ain't nobody upon ther deck o' yonder strange craft ter work her riggin' an' steer her?"

Fritz glared through the night glass at her.

"I t'ink so neider," he remarked. "I don't even see a cockroach alretty."

With his attention called to this important point, Jack looked carefully, and saw that his friends were not mistaken.

"There's another singular thing," he remarked. "Most ships under sail careen with the wind, but her hull rides as evenly as ours, and she is speeding along at a rate of speed equal to twenty knots without any apparent effort."

"What in blazes d'yer make o' it, then?" queried Tim in perplexity.

"I am completely puzzled," hopelessly replied Jack. "Where is she heading?"

"South-by-east," replied Tim, intently studying her.

"Dot looks so if it vhas all made of electricity," said Fritz. "If I vhas had der New Yorker Zeitung by meinselluf I dink I could read dose bersonal columns witoud no candle near dot ship."

"I've got a plan!" said Jack. "I'm going to follow her un-

"How you vhas do yourself dot?"

"Sink the Mermaid and track her by my camera obscura—you know I've got one fixed in the ball on top of the searchlight."

"Och! Vhy I didn'd t'ink of dot vonct?"

"Tim, bring in the white-topped table and set it beside me."

"Aye, in one minute," said Tim, leaving the wheel in his hands and stumping back into the cabin.

Jack lowered the Mermaid until only the searchlight was above water.

By the time he got her stationary Tim returned with a small, round, white-painted table, which he stood beside the boy.

Jack thereupon seized a lever which put the lenses in operation up above, and giving it a turn he swept it around with his glance fixed upon the table until the dark sea scenes were suddenly embellished with a view of the spectral ship.

It was reflected down upon the table, surrounded by the dark background of turbid sea and stormy sky.

"Dere dot vos," said Fritz. "Vait."

"I'll steer after it," said Jack, putting on a speed of forty knots.

Away dashed the Mermaid under the surface in pursuit of the phantom ship, and rapidly gained upon it.

Jack was wild to get another shot at the queer craft, but he restrained this feeling, as he was curious now to see what the peculiar vessel was going to do.

He made up his mind to follow her.

By this means he might find out something about her, and if he failed in this he had no doubt of being able to fire at her again before long in the near future.

On went the spectral ship, and on came the catamaran behind her, Jack steering by means of the camera.

Several miles were bowled off in this fashion, the phantom going straight for the south-by-east.

"She seems to be heading for Napakiang Island!" said Jack, as he caught by the lightning's flash, the dim outline of the Loo Choo Islands delineated upon the reflecting board.

"Then she's given up her chase o' ther Mary Scott?" queried Tim.

"No doubt of it. Look! Now her course is changed more to the southward—yes, she is going toward Napakiang!"

The phantom ship was heading directly toward a mass of high, beetling crags, against which the waves were beating and breaking with a sullen roar amid showers of spray.

A sudden grating of the catamaran's keels startled the divers.

"We are in very shoal water!" exclaimed Jack, raising the boat a few feet. "If we ain't careful we may run aground."

"Den how dot phandom sail here?" questioned Fritz.

"Ah! Can't ghosts go anywhere, yer lunkhead?" growled Tim.

"It's more probable she is in a channel, and we may find it if we get in her wake," said Jack, calculatingly.

The spectral ship was certainly going in a peculiar, tortuous and winding manner, and Jack found that it was certainly a channel she was in.

It seemed queer that a supernatural ship required deep water like any ordinary vessel in which to sail, yet it was so.

By following close behind her they now had no trouble, and to their surprise they saw her keep straight on toward the cliffs.

"She'll go ter pieces ag'in them rocks if she keeps on!" gasped Tim.

"We'll soon see!" replied Jack, keeping a sharp watch on the phantom.

With a swift, stately motion the strange vessel sped on, and in a few moments her bow was in the beating surf.

She seemed to plunge right ahead into the solid wall of rock, and gradually dwindle away into—nothing.

The next moment she was gone.

She had vanished as completely as if she melted.

CHAPTER XIV.

STRANDED ON AN ISLAND.

With cries of astonishment our three friends brought the catamaran to a pause and glared at the cliffs in stupefaction.

They were more convinced than ever that the fugitive was a ghostly ship, for no vessel made by human hands could have sailed right through a wall of solid, massive rock.

The heaving waters pounded the catamaran up and down, and huge, bellowing waves broke over her with the noise of thunder.

"It seems impossible! It can't be true!" gasped Jack.

"Ay, but yer seen it vanish!" answered Tim, in scared tones.

"There must be an opening—a bend around which she went."

"Oh, no! I'm blest if I can see any sich thing!"

"It may be masked by canvas painted in imitation of the rocks," argued Jack, and has a slit through which the ship could pass when the folds would close together again—or the rocks may turn on a pivot——"

"Can't be!" said Tim. "Looker them 'ere waves. They'd pound it open or tear it down, an' this 'ere wind would ribbon it."

What the old sailor said was true.

But to convince himself Jack turned the searchlight on the cliffs, as the boat was now on the surface, and as the powerful rays fell on the rocks the boy saw that they presented a barrier that could scarcely have been penetrated by the ball of a ten-inch gun.

To further test them he took a hand grenade from the ammunition-box, and, going out on deck, flung it with all his might at the cliffs.

The bomb exploded with a dull detonation, and tore cuips of the rocks off, but that was all the damage it did.

Jack was thoroughly satisfied.

"If it is a phantom ship," said he, doggedly, "having the power to vanish, reappear, and sail through rocky cliffs, I have proved that it is not proof against my gun; and the very first chance I get I'm going to blow it to the deuce!"

"I t'ink ve vhas petter got oudt of dis blace," suggested Fritz.

"Ay, now," replied Tim, "we are a-makin' leeway fast, and afore long them 'ere waves'll wash us agin ther rocks, an' dash ther Mermaid ter pieces, so it will!"

"Do you remember the course of the passage?" queried Jack.

"No," was Tim's startled reply. "How could I?"

"Then we are in extreme danger, for the wall on either side of the channel is not so deep that we can go over it in safety."

The Mermaid was turned around, and they kept her upon the surface, headed her for the sea, and started off at random.

She had not gone far, however, before they heard a dull grating again under the keel and felt an unpleasant jar.

"We've struck shallow water out of the channel," said Jack.

"Ay, an' I can't find ther channel agin, wot's more!" said Tim.

"Let her drive ahead; we must run chances now."

"Ahead she goes, then," said Tim, and he kept the boat on. She went along all right for a while, but presently there

heard the same scratching, bumping and rasping noise, and with a sudden shock the catamaran came to a pause.

"Caught!" exclaimed Jack.

"Stuck fast, sure enough!" glumly replied Tim.

"Can't you back or turn her?"

"No—I've tried it."

"Then here we must stay."

White caps were dancing all around the boat now, and they felt each big roller come hissing in, lifting them up, and bang the boat down again on the sand with a terrible crash.

If this sort of pounding kept on the boat would inevitably be weakened all over, if not ruined entirely, yet there was not water enough under her keels to float her, for the bows had run up on a bar, and she stayed there despite every effort Tim made to move her away.

Hour after hour passed by, and toward daylight the wind lulled and the heavy seas calmed down, the thunder-claps ceased and the lightning played less frequently in the murky sky.

As the tide receded it left the catamaran high and dry on a sandy shore.

Jack was the first to observe this, and it caused him great uneasiness.

"How, under the heaven, are we to get her afloat again?" he muttered as he stood alone on watch in the pilot-house and his two friends lay sleeping in their berths. "Here we are, stranded upon the shore of an island inhabited by heathen Chinese and Japanese, and no help near. I'm afraid our cruise is over!"

He watched the clouds disappearing, and saw the sun come up.

It cast a ruddy glow upon the dark cliffs, and showed him that they lay upon a barren strip of sandy shore, covered with hillocks and indentations, while a short distance away the surf beat in with a dull roar in a mass of foam.

The Yellow Sea stretched as far as the eye could see, its choppy surface gleaming like burnished gold in the splendor of the sun, while here and there its surface was dotted with sails of junks that slowly drifted along before a slight breeze.

Further along the rugged shore line was broken and stretched away inland where a strange-looking country lay teeming with tropical fruit, farms of tea plants, tremendous rice fields and other vegetations which our friends could not see.

Fritz and Tim soon awakened, and after a survey of their situation the Dutch boy went into the galley to prepare breakfast, while Tim began to calculate their exact location, and Jack went out.

He found the sand ordinarily spongy, yet hard enough to walk on, and strolled over to the sea shore.

Here he came to a pause and measured the distance with his eyes, to the boat, and then returned to the catamaran.

From the ammunition-box he took a small can and went out with it again.

"I think I see a way out of our difficulty," he muttered.

Unscrewing the cork of the can he drew a gully, with a stick, in the sand, from the boat's prow to the shore, and into it he poured a stream of floury powder from the can.

He afterward covered the gully up.

Then he attached an electric wire to the train of powder, and, going into the pilot-house, touched a lever.

Instantly the powder was exploded.

No noise was made beyond a violent puff.

Yet a vast cloud of sand was scattered in all directions, and flew a thousand feet in the air, where the wind scattered it.

A tremendous trench was ripped into the sand where the train of powder had been lying, which rapidly filled up with water that filtered from the surrounding sand and came in from the surf on shore.

No harm was done to the boat whatever.

"Hello!" gasped Tim. "Wot's this?"

"I've made a channel by which we can reach deep water," replied Jack, with a cheerful smile. "When the tide comes in this afternoon we will try to get the boat out by the stream into deep water—don't you see?"

"By thunder, you've got a head!"

"How could I live without one, you big donkey? Anyway, though, Tim, you see half the boat is afloat up forward, and by tilting up the stern we can easily get her after part in."

"Lord save yer, let's try right away!" eagerly said the old sailor.

They called Fritz, and, going out, put Jack's plan in operation so successfully that the boat at once glided into the stream.

"You vhas dalk aboutt dot rend-rock bowder, nidroglycerine, gun-cotton und udder oxblosifs, dey vhasn'd by id vhen ve vhas used dot leedle vite bowder vot you vhas invended, Shack!" said Fritz.

"It is the greatest explosive known to modern science," the boy replied, "and of such great force that its manufacture is prohibited by law. I find good use for it, however."

They found that the channel was plenty large and deep enough to float the boat, but when they got her close to the sea shore they could not get her into the water.

"We must wait for the tide to rise—that will give us plenty of depth to float out," said Jack, cheerfully. "You can see for yourselves that the embankment beyond is too shallow to let us float there for some distance out."

Fritz announced breakfast at this juncture, so they went into the cabin and partook of the meal.

"Did you notice the crooked, winding channel running in from the sea to the base of the cliff, which the phantom ship followed, boys?" asked Jack, during the meal.

"I seen me dot," said Fritz, with a nod, "und I vish ve vhas in id."

"As soon's mess is over," said Tim, "I'm a-goin' ter folly ther stream up ter ther cliff, and——"

"Hark! What's that?" interposed Jack, holding up his hand. They all listened intently.

"Men's voices!" Tim exclaimed, with a start.

A low murmur of human tones reached their ears from outside.

"Vot kind of langvitch dot vhas?" questioned Fritz.

Jack sprang to his feet.

"They sound like Chinamen speaking," he said. "I'm going to see."

He stepped to the door at the side and passed out on deck.

To his surprise he saw a score of what looked like Japanese and Chinese standing beside the gully, excitedly talking, and pointing at the boat, and as soon as he appeared they began to speak faster.

Just then their ranks parted and to the boy's amazement he beheld a tall, white man, clad in seaman's costume, push his way through the crowd and approach the Mermaid.

CHAPTER XV.

A DUEL WITH GUNS.

The stranger was a tall, heavily built man, with a black beard and dark eyes that gleamed beneath a pair of shaggy eyebrows of jet, and to all appearances he was an American or an Englishman.

He saluted Jack politely, and said, in English:

"How are you, stranger? Ain't you a little out of your latitude here in that odd-looking catamaran?"

"Considerably," replied Jack. "The fact is, we are stranded. But it is fair to infer that you are as much a stranger here as I am."

"On the contrary, I am a resident of this island and the most affluent friend of the Chinese mandarin upon whose estate you are trespassing," replied the man. "My name is Captain Firebrand, the Flying Yankee; now, pray, who are you?"

"My name is Jack Wright, a boy inventor. I came from America in this catamaran, and my business, which is of a private nature, brings me out upon the Yellow Sea, where I was cruising when we were stranded."

"Oh, you say we?"

"My two friends inside. And your companions?"

"Are fishermen, and tenants of my friend, the mandarin."

"We now know each other quite well," laughed Jack.

"Yes, indeed; but I am curious to learn what your mission is?"

"But you cannot be more curious than I am to learn yours."

"That is a secret which you may ultimately learn, young man."

"Permit me then to say the same thing in regard to my own affairs."

The bearded man scowled with ill humor.

It was evident to Jack that he was a person accustomed to command and be obeyed, and not meet with such cool indifference as that with which he was treated by the boy.

"My friend, the mandarin," said Captain Firebrand, in ugly tones, "having been apprised of the presence of your boat here, sent me down from the cliffs to bring you before him to give an account of yourselves, and I beg of you all to come ashore."

"With all due respect to his royal highness, or whatever you call him, I respectfully beg to decline seeing him," said Jack.

"In that case it becomes my duty to force you——"

"Whereupon I shall most certainly resist!" said Jack, coolly.

"And kill you all, if I fail——"

"If I don't kill you first!" said Jack, calmly.

He saw that the man was in deadly earnest, and apprehended that there was trouble in store for him with these people.

A surprised look crossed Captain Firebrand's bearded face, and turning to the Chinamen he spoke to them in their own tongue, upon which they all withdrew modern firearms from the folds of their blouses and aimed them at Jack.

The boy sprang back through the door and closed it.

"Enemies!" exclaimed he, breathlessly. "Close the shutters!"

Tim and Fritz hastened to obey him, and they had no sooner done as he asked when the Chinese fired at the boat.

The aluminum plates of the Mermaid were bullet proof, tough, and the shots, therefore, failed to do any harm.

Peering out through loop-holes they opened, our friends saw the natives talking excitedly to the man.

"I'll soon put an end to their treachery!" said the boy, in grim tones, as he took a hand grenade from the locker. "Watch them!"

He flung the grenade through one of the port-holes and it struck the ground in the midst of the Chinamen and exploded with a fearful report that echoed up on the crags.

There came a flash of fire, a puff of smoke, and a vast upheaval of sand and the remains of Chinamen.

A huge hole was blown in the beach, and when the smoke lifted, Jack saw Captain Firebrand and several of his men running toward the cliffs as fast as they could go, while scattered around where the bomb struck were the few remains of the rest.

"There's an easy-gained victory for us!" said Jack, complacently.

"Ay, but who wuz thim 'ere lubbers, anyway?" asked Tim. The boy told him, and they saw the fugitives disappear among the rocks that lined the base of the cliff.

"Who dot veller could be, und vhat he wanted?" asked Fritz.

They all saw some design in what had transpired, but they could fathom what it was, and spent the time speculating over it while waiting for the tide to rise, and the hours passed by.

Nothing more was seen of their enemies.

"For killing their friends they may try to avenge themselves," said Jack. "We must be very careful now."

The tide had turned an hour before, and came flooding the sand flats all around the trench where the boat laid.

"It'll require at least an hour ter float us over that 'ere bar," said Tim speculatively, "and I hopes as we won't get tackled afore."

"Holy Chce!" ejaculated Fritz, who was peering out the window, and interrupting the old sailor. "Looker up on dem gliffs."

He pointed at the top of the crags as he spoke, and they saw that the edge of the precipice was swarming with Chinamen, among whom they easily distinguished the figure of Captain Firebrand.

They had drawn a mounted gun to the edge, and were then in the act of depressing the muzzle to bear upon the catamaran.

Our friends were very much startled.

"They are afraid of our bombs at close range," exclaimed Jack, "and mean to try and blow us to pieces from up there."

Just then the gun was depressed to what the marksmen considered the proper angle, and Captain Firebrand discharged it.

There came a belch of fire and smoke, a thunderous roar and a terrible scream as a heavy shot came hurtling down from the bluffs toward the Mermaid.

Bang! came the shot, and it struck the sand a few feet away from the boat, plowed it up in great furrows, and then buried itself out of sight.

"A miss is as good as a mile," said Jack, with a sigh of relief. "I'll return the compliment with my own gun."

"Shall I 'bout ship?" asked Tim.

"Yes; there's plenty room here."

The old sailor started the propellers, and spun the wheel around, when the Mermaid described a circle within her own length, and then came to a pause with her bow facing the cliffs.

Upon the cliff-top the Chinamen were reloading their gun and preparing for another shot at the catamaran.

"Ve vhas gooped up here in dis drench so like rats by a drap," regretfully said Fritz, as he glanced back at the bar which intercepted their passage from the stream to the sea.

"Jump ashore—we are close to the embankment here," said Jack, "and plant one of the torpedoes in the bar with an electric wire attached. You can then blow the bar away."

Happy at this suggestion, Fritz carried it out.

Scarcely was he ashore, however, when the gun on the cliffs roared out again, and a second shot rushed down, so well aimed that it struck the water with a splash between the after ends of the hulls, where it plunged into the bottom of the trench.

Jack elevated the muzzle of his own gun and sighted it.

"Missed again, eh?" he queried.

"Aye, aye!" answered Tim.

The boy then discharged his gun, and the projectile struck the edge of the cliff below where the gun and the Chinamen stood.

A great mass of rock and dirt shot up in the air.

When they glanced at the spot where the shot struck they beheld a huge, ragged fissure cut out of the rock.

Half of the Chinamen and their gun were blown to fragments.

Fritz gave a yell of delight, and hastened over to the bar, where he planted the bomb, with an electric wire attached to the boat, and he was just about to arise, when a man who had been in the channel that ran to the cliffs rushed up to him.

With one blow of an edgeless sword made of brass discs which he carried he knocked the young Dutchman senseless.

Down went Fritz, uttering a dismal groan, and the man seized him by an arm and dragged him over to the channel, the bank of which he reached ere Jack saw him.

"They've captured Fritz!" gasped the boy.

Crash! went one of the pilot-house doors open, and out ran the boy with a rifle in his hand, with which he began to fire at the man from the deck, when with extreme rapidity the rascal picked Fritz up, and screened himself with his body.

Compelled to desist, the boy rushed inside again, just as Tim exploded the bomb, blowing the bar away, and the big Chinaman sprang into a boat with his victim, and paddled away.

"He's carrying him to the cliffs!" gasped Jack.

"Dash my mainstay!" roared Tim. "Come! Folly ther lubber!"

"We can't get out on account of the bar, and——"

"It's blowed ter pieces!"

With an exclamation, Jack grasped the wheel, started the electricity, and turning the boat around again, he saw the bar was gone.

There was a clear passage now, and under Jack's guidance the catamaran dashed through it without touching bottom and shot out upon the sea.

There she made a circle and darted into the channel up which the Chinaman was paddling his boat with the senseless Fritz.

But the Mermald had not covered half the distance when the Mongolian's boat disappeared behind some rocks, and when the catamaran reached the spot it had vanished.

Fritz was in the power of their enemies!

CHAPTER XVI.

WRECK OF THE SILVER ARROW.

"Jack, stop the boat! It's as much as our lives are worth to go on!"

This thrilling cry came from Tim, and the boy shut off power, reversed the screws, and the Mermaid began to back.

"What's the matter now?" inquired the young inventor.

Tim pointed up at the cliffs.

Glancing in the direction indicated, the boy saw several of the Chinamen upon the crest, with big boulders in their hands, which they were upon the point of hurling down on the boat.

He drove the Mermaid backward with all possible speed, and when the rocks came down they missed the boat.

Tim fired several shots up at the Mongolians from a rifle, which put a stop to their hostilities, and gave the boat a chance to get away to a safe distance on the sea.

"They may kill poor Fritz now, out of revenge," said Jack sorrowfully, "and we can't lift a hand to defend him."

"You lot! It's too bad—too bad!" groaned Tim, wiping a tear from his great eye and sniffing audibly. "We wuz sich good friends, an' he wuz sich a cussed good lubber, in spite

o' his stinkin' breath an' his pot-belly. A feller never knows what a friend is till ther poor swab is a goner."

"That's so," assented Jack gloomily.

"Now, thar's Bismarck," said Tim, pointing at the parrot, which was perched on a picture frame. "Looker ther hooked-nosed ole skunk—did yer ever cast yer weather-eye on sich a picture o' mute grief afore? He seems ter kinder know as his master's a-goin' ter git b'iled up wi' lizard stew an' birds-nest jiblets fer them cock-eyed heathens' supper. Never mind, Bismarck, I'll take care o' yer fer Fritz, I will," added Tim, taking the bird down. "An' I'll be good ter yer, an' feed yer, an' pet yer, an'—— Oh! Ouch! Good Lord! Ther gosh-hanged son-of-a-sea-cook has bit my finger, cuss his infernal ugly mug! an' I'll bust ther hul goldurned head offer him!"

Tim slammed the screeching bird against the wall, executed a war dance with his wooden peg, and sucked his finger.

He glared at the parrot, and shook his fist at it, and he might have flung a piece of furniture at it if he hadn't heard Jack laugh at him.

"Come, Tim, don't be a fool!" said the boy. "Instead of wasting your time that way, try to plan out a way to resc Fritz."

"Can't think o' nuthin'!" growled the old sailor savage. Jack drove the catamaran out on the sea, not knowing what to do, and toward nightfall was yet unable to solve the mystery.

He beat up and down the coast, and they kept a sharp watch upon the cliffs, but beheld nothing more of their enemies, as a thick haze swept over the Yellow Sea.

By the time the darkness of night settled down all sight of land had disappeared from view, and the junks had left the open sea.

The two divers were disconsolate.

"I'll go ashore to-morrow," said Jack at last, "and I'll hunt for him till I find him, or avenge any injury they do him."

"Count on ole Tim ter help yer, too, lad!" said the ancient mariner.

Just then a dull clanging sound met their ears.

They listened, and heard seven bells struck on shipboard.

"Half-past seven!" ejaculated Tim.

"Then there's a ship near us?" queried the boy.

"No doubt. Hark! Don't you hear ther creakin' o' ther riggin'?"

"True—it's off to the leeward there."

"I'll give her a hail if you say so."

"Go ahead—I'll take the wheel."

Jack steered the catamaran over toward the direction the sound came from, and presently a ship loomed up in the mist.

It was a full-rigged brig with all sails set, and they saw on the stern the name of Silver Arrow, Boston, U. S. A.

"Brig ahoy!" yelled Tim, through an open window.

"Ahoy!" came the reply.

"Whar are yer bound for?"

"Pekin," was the answer.

Just then there came a shout from the lookout aboard of the Silver Arrow, who cried in stentorian tones:

"Ship ahoy!"

"Where?" came the captain's question.

"On our weather beam, sir."

"What do you make her out to——"

"It's a ghost! It's a shadow ship!" yelled the lookout in terror.

"A what?" was the startled reply.

"The phantom ship of the Yellow Sea!"

A chorus of cries from the men followed this announcement. The fog had broken, and through the rift there loomed up

the ghostly outlines of the phantom ship not fifty fathoms distant.

For an instant Jack was so much astonished he started the Mermaid away, but she had not gone far when he heard a fearful crash, and glancing back he saw the phantom ship come in collision with the brig bow on.

The prow of the spectral craft struck the hull of the brig at the cathead, and stove a big hole in her, recoiled from the shock, knocked the Silver Arrow over upon its beam ends, and then shot ahead athwart its bowsprit.

In a moment the phantom ship disappeared in the mist.

A scene of dire confusion occurred upon the brig, for she was fast filling with water and sinking.

Cries of distress rang out on all sides from the crew, boats were hastily lowered and manned, and just as the unfortunate vessel was settling down for its last final plunge, the entire crew escaped, and made off for the boats.

"Tim! For heaven's sake, did you see that?" gasped Jack.

"Lord save us, ther Silver Arrer is a wreck!" returned the old sailor.

"And there she sinks now."

"An' ther crew, Jack, ther crew?"

"They have taken to the boats, every one of them."

Just then the stoven ship sunk forever beneath the Yellow Sea, but in such shallow water that the trucks of her masts protruded above the surface in plain view.

There were four quarter boats in the water, and they were scattered.

Two of them were near the submarine boat, however, and Jack stopped the Mermaid and ran out on deck.

"Hey!" he yelled to the frightened sailors. "Row over here."

The shipwrecked seamen obeyed, and when they came up astern Jack took the painter of one boat and secured it to a cleat.

"Now fasten the painter of the other boat astern of the first boat!" he cried. "I will tow you ashore."

"All right, sir," replied the captain, and he obeyed.

"Where are the other two boats?" cried Jack.

"Rowed away."

"They'll get lost in this fog!"

"I'm afraid so."

"Well, I'll try to find them."

The boy ran back to the pilot-house and started the searchlight, shooting its sharp, penetrating beams off in all directions.

It cut through the mist like a knife, and presently showed them the dim outlines of the two missing boats off in the distance.

Their crews were rowing them away with might and main, as they were afraid of encountering the phantom ship which had cut them down a few moments previously.

"Ahoy! Boats ahoy!" shouted Jack, in lusty tones.

The fog drowned his voice, making it sound dull and smothered, and the crews of the boats failed to hear him.

Upon seeing this, Jack started his boat after them, and as soon as he was in speaking distance, he hailed them with:

"Heave to, there, and make fast astern of us!"

"Aye, aye!" was the glad reply of the scared sailors.

They rowed around astern, and Jack saw them string out in a line, whereupon he steered by the compass, and towed them to the island where the shore was unbroken by rocks.

"This is the best I can do for you so far," said the boy. "Cast off and go ashore. This is Napakiang Island. Some passing ship will carry you back to the States. Did you lose anything of special value on board of the wreck, captain?"

"Aye. There was a safe in my cabin aft, which was unlocked," replied the skipper of the Silver Arrow. "It contained a large sum of money I was carrying for a banker.

My ship and cargo were insured, but the money in the safe is not. The money is in a large cash box."

"I shall get it for you, then," said Jack. "Remain upon this beach until to-morrow, when I will return with it for you."

"But it is under water."

"Oh, that is nothing. I am a diver."

"May God bless you for all you have done for us, my boy."

Jack took his bearings, and returning to where the Silver Arrow sank, as it was easy to find the place, he submerged the Mermaid until she rested on the bottom in fifty feet of water.

Giving Tim instructions how to act, the boy donned a diving suit, and going out by the sea door, he saw the wreck of the ill-fated brig lying keeled over within the radiance of the electric lights that were blazing from the catamaran.

The boy strode toward the wreck, when to his amazement he saw several men in old-fashioned divers' costumes approaching the Silver Arrow from the opposite direction.

The strange divers saw Jack at the same moment he saw them.

CHAPTER XVII.

STRANGERS UNDER THE SEA.

There were three men in the party of divers who were approaching the wreck of the Silver Arrow, and they carried large electric lamps in their hands, the wires of which trailed with their air tubes and guide ropes.

They beheld Jack as soon as he saw them, for they had been keenly watching the blaze of light streaming from the Mermaid.

It surprised them, no doubt, to see the light, and to observe that Jack was not armed with air hose and other adjuncts such as they wore. Moreover, the brightly glittered metal of his suit of mail was a surprise, and they were dazzled by the glow of his helmet lamp.

The boy sprang upon the deck of the wreck and stood watching them and wondering who they were and where they came from, when they drew together in a group and he saw them holding a long conversation in the deaf and dumb alphabet.

Although Jack understood the sign language, that which the strangers employed was entirely unknown to him, so he could not make anything of the signs they were making.

The boy, therefore, decided that they were not conversing in English.

By the time they got through their motions the boy saw that they had determined to advance, for they came gliding toward him, and, as they all carried knives in their belts, and short-handled axes in their hands, he reckoned them as formidable antagonists.

"Who the deuce can they be?" Jack muttered. "What do they want down here? Can they mean any mischief toward me?"

He instinctively felt for his weapons, and then yelled:

"Hey, Tim!"

"What d'yer want?" replied the old sailor within the boat.

"There are three strange divers here. Come out and join me!"

"Ay, ay, lad, that I will!" answered Tim, in surprised tones.

The three men now reached the wreck, and made a motion as if they were going to come up on deck, when Jack gestured them back.

To show that he did not approve of their trespass upon the wreck he drew one of his knives and brandished the blade.

That was quite intimation enough to the strange divers that their presence upon the wreck was not wanted, and they held another protracted sign dialogue, after which they made a combined rush and gained the deck.

Now came the axe toward Jack's skull, but by a dexterous movement backward he avoided the blow and retaliated by letting the blade of his knife penetrate the man's arm.

A gash was cut in the strange diver's costume, letting in the water, and he hastily dropped his axe, frantically jerked at the life-line, and his friends at the other end of it began to drag him rapidly away, up toward the sea surface.

Had they delayed he would have been drowned.

It was evident now to Jack that the divers came from some boat upon the surface a short distance away.

The boy had no time to speculate over the matter, however, for the two other men had evidently become angered over the fate of their companions, and now started threateningly toward Jack.

He stood his ground, undauntedly, and parried a blow on his arm which one of them dealt, and was just about to dart in and serve this man the way he had done the first one, when he tripped over a hatch coaming and fell prostrate.

In an instant both divers stood over him, and their axes were raised to despatch the recumbent boy when Tim arrived on the scene, encased in a diving suit.

He was too far away to render Jack the aid of his hands, but he was armed with an electric pistol and sent a ball into one of the divers, where it exploded and instantly killed him.

The other man was overwhelmed with startled amazement at this unlooked-for catastrophe, and precipitately fled, leaving our two friends masters of the situation.

The glaring light of Jack's helmet-lantern pierced the brass-barred visor of his helmet as he turned to fly, and the boy was startled to see that he was the personage who styled himself Captain Firebrand.

The other two divers were, very likely, Chinamen.

Up toward the surface shot the Flying Yankee, overwhelmed with alarm over the fate which had befallen his companions, and by the time Tim reached Jack he had disappeared from view.

"That was a lucky shot!" cried the boy, scrambling to his feet and shaking the old sailor's hand. "You're a trump, Tim! But, I say, do you know who that scoundrel was?"

"Ain't got no sorter idee," replied Tim.

"Captain Firebrand! He must have come from the shore in a boat."

"You don't say so! Who'd a-thought it?"

"They must have seen the Silver Arrow go down, and were bent upon plundering her of any valuables she contained."

"Which we perwented—eh, lad? But as they're a-goner, yer'd best go down in ther cabin an' get the contents o' their safe."

"Yes, for if the Flying Yankee should happen to return with reinforcements he might thwart me and sacrifice our lives."

"I'll stay up here on deck an' keep watch fer yer, lad."

Jack nodded, and making his way aft he pushed open the door of the captain's cabin and entered.

The light of his lamp was swept around until he located the safe, which stood in a corner beneath a book-rack, and he knelt down before it, pulled the door open, and there stood the Japanned cash-box containing the banker's money.

Jack seized it and returning to the deck he saw Tim pointing off the stern of the boat, and, looking in the indicated direction, the boy saw several shadowy figures gliding toward them.

"More divers!" he exclaimed. "Captain Firebrand has

gone for help. They are desperate. But we must not remain here."

"Yer've got all yer want, ain't yer, lad?" asked Tim.

"This box is all there was of special value aboard," replied the boy.

"Let's get under way, then. Thar ain't no sorter 'arthly use in a-stayin' here an' a-fightin' them lubbers now."

"Hold on, Tim! You forget that one of them might be a good hostage to get poor Fritz back if they haven't killed him already."

"Ay, now, I never thought o' that. Shall we capture one?"

"By all means, if it is possible to do so. Let—me—see," said Jack, reflectively. "Here, carry this box into the boat and I will fix them."

Tim carried the box away, and Jack remained where he was until the newcomers saw him, and then began to retreat.

He was followed by the divers, and continued to retreat until he reached the forward deck of the Mermaid, on which he sprang.

The strangers followed him closely.

The electric wire by which the bomb had been exploded was still fastened to the binding-post upon the front of the pilot-house, and seizing it with his rubber-gloved hand, Jack shouted to Tim, who, he saw, had by this time got within the pilot-house:

"Turn lever No. 8, half current, Tim!"

"Wot are yer a-goin' ter do?" queried the sailor, complying.

"Entrap one of those fellows," was the boy's reply.

He saw that the leader was Captain Firebrand, for the boy recognized the suit he wore, and could not mistake his burly figure.

The Flying Yankee was in advance of his men a dozen paces, and with the wire in his hand Jack approached him.

The strangers had come to a pause, and were looking at the dazzling catamaran in evident amazement.

Evidently determined to get the best of Jack, the diver hastened to meet him with a big knife, and when they came close to each other the Flying Yankee made a rush.

Jack extended his hand with the wire and touched the copper helmet worn by his adversary, when there came an electric flash.

The Flying Yankee dropped like a log, stunned by the shock that spun through him, and the boy lifted him with one hand and dragged him to the stern of the boat, followed by the rest.

Here he cut the man's life-line and hose, and hastily dragged him into the boat to save him from drowning.

Once within the boat, Jack removed the man's diving suit and saw that he had been stricken senseless by the electric current.

"Close the shutters, Tim!" shouted the boy.

He then proceeded to restore the man to his senses, and at the first sign of animation he secured the rascal's hands with handcuffs and manacled his ankles together.

There came a shower of harmless blows against the hull of the cabin from the axes of the men outside as Tim went about closing the shutters, and Jack peered out through one of the port-holes.

The strange divers had swarmed upon the deck outside, and were trying their utmost to demolish the Mermaid with their axes.

Just as the boy made this discovery one of the men came toward the port-hole at which the boy stood and before Jack could close the shutter over it, he smashed in the glass with his axe.

The boy sprang back with a cry of alarm as the water gushed in.

Both he and Tim yet had on their diving suits, and were

in no danger; but there was a possibility of the boat remaining sunk.

"Tim!" he shouted, "raise the boat, quick! A window is broken!"

"By gosh, that's tough!" cried Tim, and he dashed into the pilot-house.

In poured the water through the broken window, flooding the interior of the boat with a hollow, roaring sound.

The old sailor started the pumps, emptying the hulls of their ballast, and the Mermaid slowly began to rise to the surface, with the strange divers clinging to the deck and battering her all over upon the exterior in an effort to destroy the boat.

Up went the boat and in poured the water, and Jack ran up forward and joined Tim in the pilot-house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ESCAPED.

Several minutes of the most intense suspense for Jack and Tim passed by, when the boat suddenly emerged from the yellow water, and the influx stopped at once.

There were several feet of water in the cabin, but they easily pumped it out, and then opening the loop-holes the two divers began to fire on the men on the outside.

In order to save themselves the strangers sprang back in the sea, and vanished from sight.

Freed of their enemies, Jack replaced the broken glass with a new one, and then started the boat toward the shore of the isle where they had left the crew of the sunken brig awaiting them.

A thick haze yet overhung the water, but that did not interfere with Jack's management of the boat any, and they presently reached the place where the sailors were awaiting them.

Jack ran the boat as near to land as he could with safety, and then, with the money-box in his hand he jumped overboard, still incased in his diving suit, and waded ashore.

Tim kept the searchlight turned full upon him, and when he reached the shipwrecked sailors, and they saw him in a diver's suit, the men were not surprised when he handed them the money-box, for they saw what means the boy employed to recover it.

Profusely thanked and blessed by all hands, Jack said not a word, but leaving the box in their hands he returned to the catamaran, and got on board again.

Driving the boat back to the neighborhood of the wreck, our friends used the searchlight in every direction, hunting for the boat from which the divers descended into the sea, but failed to find any sign of it.

Daylight came and they both turned in, after bringing the Mermaid to a pause below the surface and sought for a much-needed rest after the fatigue they had passed through.

It was midday before either of them stirred, and when they awoke the recollection of Fritz's capture saddened them again.

Tim prepared breakfast, and they had hardly finished eating it when they heard their prisoner in the store-room yell angrily:

"Say—do you fellows mean to starve me to death in here?"

"I forgot all about that rascal," said Jack, with a faint smile.

"Better find out from ther lubber wot they done wi' poor Fritz," suggested Tim, as they arose from the table.

"A good idea; I'll act upon it, old fellow," said Jack, and he passed into the back room where he found Captain Fire-

brand lying on the floor beside his divingdress scowling at him.

"It's about time you came!" snarled the rascal, unamiably.

"Surely," said Jack, coolly, "you don't expect me to treat you decently after all the harm you have tried to do me?"

"Of course I do," blandly replied the captive. "I'm hungry and thirsty, and I want you to supply my wants as quickly as possible."

"Well, you're a cheeky customer!"

"Isn't this concern a submarine boat?"

"Certainly; have you only just found that out?"

"I suspected it all along. That's why I tried to lure you ashore and get possession of it. You see, I want to own the boat badly."

"To steal the cargoes of ships wrecked by the phantom ship?"

"Exactly my plan. I must say this boat is a marvel, and the diving suits and apparatus you use beats mine all to pieces."

"Look here!" said Jack, sternly. "What have you done with my friend?"

"You mean the young Dutchman captured by one of my men?"

"That's the one. Has any harm befallen him?"

"Not yet. We've got him a prisoner on board of my boat."

Jack felt relieved, and he heard Tim chuckle with delight.

"Well," said the boy, "we want him back, or as heaven is my witness you shall be burned to death with electric wires."

"In other words, you mean to electrocute me, eh?" coolly asked the man.

"Yes. Now tell me how I can get him."

"That's easily done; exchange me for him."

"How can I do it?" eagerly asked Jack.

"Run your boat near the cliffs, and I will parley with my friends."

"If I contemplate or practice any treachery, remember that I will put an end to your life without mercy."

"Oh, I ain't afraid for my life!" coolly replied Captain Firebrand, "for I have risked it too often in time gone by for that. Do as I tell you, my lad, and you will find everything will be all right. Now fetch in my breakfast, for I'm as hungry as a bear."

Tim gave him something to eat and drink.

Jack then started the boat for the cliffs, and within a short time they came in sight of the place where the Mermaid had been stranded, when a thrilling sight met their view.

On top of the crags there was a large number of Mongolians, who were shouting, gesticulating, and pointing downward at the face of the precipice in the greatest excitement.

"What can be the matter with them, I wonder?" muttered Jack.

"Avast thar, it's crazy they must be!" Tim exclaimed.

"No, no! Look there! I see the cause of their excitement."

"Shiver me if it ain't a lubber climbin' down the face o' ther cliffs."

"Aye, Tim, and, by Jingo, it's Fritz!"

"Oh, good Lor!"

"Don't you recognize him now?"

"I do, lad, sure enough!"

"He must be escaping."

"O' course he is. Jack—Jack! Wot kin we do ter help ther lad?"

"Use our guns to prevent the gang above from hurting him."

Half way down the face of the cliffs was the figure of the Dutch boy, and he was slowly and carefully descending at

a spot above the channel that ran into the rocks, by clinging with hands and feet to the protuberances and tiny ledges.

Jack was thrilled over Fritz's peril, for he was fully one hundred feet above the stream and his hand and foot holds were so slight that the least thing seemed capable of throwing him down.

He kept descending, however, and managed to get fifty feet further, when, with a wild cry, he lost his hold and fell.

Down, down, down shot his body, flying through the air like a cannon ball, and Tim and Jack, with a feeling of horror too intense for description, turned as pale as death and averted their closed eyes, unable to bear the sight of Fritz's death.

Having been directly over the stream, and as the water was deep, Fritz landed with a violent splash and disappeared, but he soon came to the surface again, entirely uninjured.

Slightly dazed, he struck out for the sandy beach, and reached it just as a large boat filled with the native islanders appeared on the stream and opened fire upon him.

Fritz reached the strand and got behind a rock unhurt, when Jack drove the catamaran into the stream, and flinging open the window he and Tim began to blaze away at the occupants of the boat, driving them helter skelter out of sight behind the rocks.

Fritz now saw the Mermaid, and rushing down to the stream he sprang in and struck out for the boat.

Breathless and exhausted he reached it, and Tim, who had gone out on deck, helped him up out of the water.

They went inside the boat, shaking hands heartily, and then a rain of bullets came down harmlessly upon the catamaran from the Chinamen upon the cliffs.

Jack turned the boat and put out to sea at full speed, and within a few minutes they were out of range of the men upon the top of the precipice.

It was some time ere Fritz was sufficiently recovered to give an account of himself, but they soon learned a most wonderful story from his lips.

He said that his captor had brought him through a large opening in the base of the cliffs around behind the rocks, into which the stream flowed, and that it led them into a large and beautiful bay in a hollow in back of the cliffs.

There was a regular Chinese settlement clustered around this bay, with a temple of Buddha and magnificent houses, in which temple he had been confined by his captors.

The Dutch boy's description of the wonderful riches of this place baffled the most gorgeous tales in the Arabian Nights, and he said that Captain Firebrand dwelt there in the luxury of a sultan, and was the real owner of the place.

He had managed to get free of his bonds by severing them on the jagged edge of a stone, and made his escape from the cell in which he was confined, and ran into a room so filled with treasures that a dozen ships would be required to carry it away.

Discovered, he left the place, and managed to get out in the streets, where, pursued by a fast gathering crowd, he ran to the cliff tops, and, as all escape was cut off, he attempted to scale them.

Our friends knew the rest.

It was evident to our friends that Captain Firebrand had secured a tremendous fortune from the wrecks in the Yellow Sea, down to which he went with his men in their diving suits, and Jack was delighted to think that he was compelled to let the man go.

"I'll go in and tell him about Fritz's escape," he chuckled.

Leaving the wheel in Tim's hands, he went back in the room in which he had secured his prisoner.

But the man was gone!

An overturned tool box on the floor, from which a number of tools and saws had tumbled, told too plainly how

the rascal had cut his manacles, and the sternmost door swinging open showed that he had dropped into the sea and swam away.

CHAPTER XIX.

DISLODGING THE GHOST.

On the night after the foregoing events occurred, while Jack was cruising about the north side of the island, and his two friends were sleeping, he descried the phantom ship a league away to the east.

He was very much startled by this unexpected view of the apparition, and without awakening his companions, he headed the Mermaid in pursuit of the ghostly cruiser.

It was a clear, moonlit night, and the pale, ghastly outlines of the spectral craft stood out in bold relief against a background of light blue sky, in which myriads of golden stars were twinkling.

She was yet without her mainmast, and was gliding over the water with a swift yet stately motion, not a soul to be seen upon her decks, her long, tapering masts and bowsprit lending the low hull a most graceful outline.

Her speed, too, was remarkable, the strong east wind seeming to waft her over the bounding waves so that she apparently scarcely touched their crests.

To the leeward there were a number of junks and coast-wise schooners drifting along, but the phantom ship was scarcely sighted by their sleepy watches when every one of them fled with all speed, and every indication of intense alarm.

A disdainful smile hovered over Jack's face at this sign of terror with which the dreaded sea terror had inspired all the sailors of the Yellow Sea, and he increased the speed of the catamaran until it fairly flew along the surface at a pace of at least fifty knots an hour.

"They are all afraid of it, and fly before its approach," muttered the boy, "while I, anxious to meet the beggar at close range, hasten to meet it, in hopes of putting a shot in its hull below the water line, and sinking it forever."

On sped the Mermaid like a locomotive, and the boy rapidly began to close up the gap that stretched between them.

The unusual rapidity at which the boat was working aroused Tim, whose next trick it was at the wheel, and he came into the pilot house gaping, blinking and asking gruffly:

"Wot yer doin' now, Jack, speedin' ther Mermaid?"

The boy looked around with a peculiar smile.

"Yes," he responded. "Speeding her after the phantom ship."

"Heavens above! Yer don't tell me!" gasped Tim, with a start, as he hastily stumped over to the window. "Whar is it, lad?"

"Off yonder to the windward."

"I don't see it."

"Why, there it—no, by Jove, it's gone!"

The phantom had suddenly and mysteriously vanished.

Jack gazed around blankly for a few moments, rubbed his eyes, looked again, and then looked very much disgusted.

"Ye warn't dreamin', I hope?" asked Tim, suspiciously.

"Oh, no. It was there—moving—now it's vanished, that's all."

"Jest like ther blamed thing!" growled Tim, disappointedly.

They scoured the locality where the ship disappeared without finding any trace of it, and finally gave it up in despair.

"There isn't any use looking further," said Jack. "We can't find a thing that simply melts and fades away until it

choses to appear to our sight again! It's as tantalizing as a Will-o'-the-Wisp."

"Queer we never get in close range o' it," commented Tim.

"Very; for then we could see what it's made of, more especially on such a beautifully clear night as this is."

"'Tain't likely as ther sperrits wot mans it 'll let us."

"Bosh! Spirits! I don't believe in that supernatural theory about that craft, Tim. I'll admit that it's a puzzling thing, and the mystery about it seems hard to solve, but I'll guarantee that if I'm given the opportunity I crave I'll expose the whole business, and you'll find a human agency connected with it."

Tim shook his head skeptically, for, like most all sailors, he was very superstitious about such things, and his faith was not very easily shaken in that respect.

"Mebbe yer right, an' mebbe yer ain't!" he observed, sapiently, as he shook his gray head and run his fingers through his beard, "but 'tain't fer me ter say neither till I has facks proved ter me. Looker ther way as things is a-happenin'. I ain't no perfessor o' spiritualism, but I'll stake my wooden leg ag'in a chew o' terbacker as thar's spooks in it, an' you'll find it out, too, in due time."

"When I do I'll be convinced," said Jack, looking at the clock, "and now as it's time for your trick at the wheel I'll turn in."

He thereupon left Tim with instructions to go north, and the night passed away without any event of moment transpiring.

The next day they put into one of the port towns, and got a fresh supply of water and provisions aboard, after which the cruise to the northward was continued at random.

When night fell, Jack found that the batteries needed recharging and started the dynamo, for the current propelling the boat was becoming very feeble, and they could not make very fast time.

It was Fritz's trick at the wheel at the time, and while the boy was busying himself in the battery room, the young Dutchman was suddenly treated to a view of the phantom ship.

It suddenly appeared, not fifty fathoms ahead of the Mermaid, causing Fritz to suddenly look up from the binnacle at which he had been glancing, and it thrilled him through and through.

He gave a sudden yell of horror, started back with his hair on end, his eyes bulging and his face drawn, and then a panic seized him, he forgot his duty, left the wheel to care for itself, and suddenly fled, roaring boisteriously:

"Dot phandom! Dot phandom!"

Jack rushed in, collided with him, and they both fell to the floor, where they rolled over and over.

"What ails you?" demanded Jack, bounding to his feet.

"Dot ghost vhas come back!" groaned Fritz, arising.

"Where is it?"

"Right by der front of dot Mermaid alretty."

"So close? Thank the Lord—it's just what I want!" cried Jack in delight, and with a wild rush he entered the pilot-house.

But again the phantom had vanished.

Jack was fearfully disappointed, for he expected to get a shot at it.

Fritz came and glanced timidly over his shoulder.

"Vot! Iss it gone?" he roared, regaining courage.

"Of course. Never mind, we may meet it again."

It did not appear that night, but every night for a week it suddenly came in view at different distant points, but the moment the Mermaid started in pursuit of it, the phantom ship vanished again as mysteriously as it appeared.

In this manner the Mermaid was led on a chase from the entrance to the Yellow Sea straight through it to the Gulf

of Pe Chele, and the last sight they had of it was when it finally disappeared among the rocks on the coast of Corea.

The Mermaid cruised around there for a fortnight, and no sign of the phantom ship was seen again, and they finally gave up the hunt.

"We cannot find it, boys," said Jack to his friends. "It has gone from the gulf, and we may as well cruise southward again. As we had better luck at the Loo Choo Islands, I'm going back there."

"Jist my sentiments," said Tim, with a nod.

"Vot's der matter mit a fight?" suggested Fritz, with a grin.

"A fight with whom?" asked Jack.

"Captain Firebrand und his gang."

"The very thing! Why didn't I think of that before? We owe him a grudge, and if this sea was rid of that scoundrel and his rascally gang, perhaps some of the ships that go down in the shallow waters might be saved with their cargoes instead of falling into the hands of that avaricious rascal."

Accordingly the catamaran was headed for the south, and a sharp lookout was kept up for the phantom ship without any result, and they finally approached Napakiang Island again.

It was a cloudy, windy night when they came in view of the island and stopped the Mermaid opposite the cliffs.

During the trip back Jack had busied himself making projectiles for his gun of a power far greater than any which he had hitherto ever used, and with these he now loaded the gun.

"I am going to bombard those cliffs," he told his friends, "and by the time I get through there will be a clear passage into the flat country beyond. With one hundred shots of these awful projectiles, I have no doubt that I could blow this entire island clear off the face of the globe."

He did not exaggerate in this statement, for with the very first shot he fired at the cliffs to the right of the stream there came an awful roar, and a fearful upheaval of earth and rock.

Pulverized to a powder, the iron cliff was riven through by an abrasion a thousand feet wide, which was blown high in the air, and carried far out to sea by the wind, while the shock caused the island to tremble as if from an earthquake.

Hundreds of Chinese swarmed out on the cliff to learn the cause.

Jack fired another shot, and another enormous mass of the cliffs was torn away, forming a small bay, into which the sea rushed, while hundreds of the Chinese perished.

The boy was just preparing for a third shot, when out from the island rushed the phantom ship to the sea, and the next moment it vanished beneath the water.

"I've dislodged the evil genius of the island!" cried Jack, "and now I've got it where I want it. We'll see if I can't master the ghostly ship!"

And plunging the Mermaid under the sea he drove her along to the spot where the phantom ship had vanished.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LAST OF THE PHANTOM.

The two terrible shots Jack fired at the cliffs had changed the looks of that portion of the island, and when he saw the phantom ship come out and go beneath the sea, he felt sure of meeting with the ghostly vessel.

By the time the Mermaid reached the spot where the phantom ship went down it was gone.

Jack kept his boat under water, and started the lights in a brilliant glow, for the cloudy night made the water look very dark.

He kept a sharp lookout ahead, and presently descried a large white object ahead of the catamaran.

It soon proved to be the phantom ship.

"There it is, now!" exclaimed the boy, excitedly.

"But what's its masts and sails?" demanded Tim.

"Folded back across her deck. The foot of the masts must be lashed to the deck, to double them back that way."

"And that ghostly light seems to be gone," said Fritz, disappointedly.

"Ghostly imagination you mean!" said Jack contemptuously. "Don't you see that the ship, masts, spars, sails and ropes are merely painted white? We have been duped! The ship is a wooden one!"

"So they are!" muttered Tim.

"And the phantom ship is a submarine boat!" said Jack.

"Shiminey Christmas!" ejaculated Fritz. "Dot vas so?"

"Which accounts for her sudden mysterious disappearances."

"Ay, but how do you account for her sailin' through ther cliffs?" asked Tim. "No mortal boat could a-done that!"

"Why," said Fritz, "now I vhas remember, when dot Shina-man vhas shtole me mit his poat I came to mine senses und see dot he brung me troo a openin' in de bottom of dot cliffs, dot is covered up in high vater und vitch vah hid by daytime by der rocks near der front of id."

"That settles it!" said Jack. "Now I see through the whole game. We never had a good look at the phantom ship at close range before. The transparent sails are merely big nets. What fools we have been to let ourselves be so deceived. But, then, in a case where ghosts prevail, our imaginations become very vivid, and we actually believe extravagances which have no foundation, in fact. I'll soon put a final test to the case by firing at her."

The phantom ship was only a short distance ahead, and they saw that she was a steam vessel worked by a propeller. Everything about her was painted pure white.

Her masts and rigging lay folded upon the deck, and evidently worked by a hinge-like apparatus, while the divers saw that air was brought down to the submerged boat by the old-fashioned principle of big tubes that ran up to the surface.

She could not bury herself any more than enough to cover herself by the waves, and was worked by the crew from below deck by a series of ropes controlling the steering gear.

The mode of her descent and ascent was, no doubt, by pumping water ballast in or out, as it was required, to sink or raise her.

Jack saw through the humbug at once, but had to admit that the novelty of the idea was well calculated to deceive and terrify the simple-minded, superstitious sailors against whom the attacks of the ship were mostly directed at un-early hours of night only.

It was then no cause for wonder to the boy that his shot had carried away her mainmast the time he crippled her.

Another impression dawned upon him.

Captain Firebrand must have been guilty of this queer contrivance and it now became apparent that he had recognized the superiority of the Mermaid over the phantom ship for the use to which he put his white-painted boat, and for that reason he had been actuated in trying to secure Jack's catamaran.

The boy aimed his gun at the fugitive boat and fired.

The shot swept the rigging from the decks.

Another shot followed.

It carried away her bowsprit, and they saw her rise, sur-
rounded.

"Stand by for action!" cried Jack, excitedly. "They are going to the top!"

"Blow ther lubberly craft ter smilthereens!" exclaimed Tim. Again Jack fired and the stern of the white boat was carried away.

Her bow swung around and Jack saw the name emblazoned in gilt, there, of:

"THE FLYING YANKEE."

"That accounts for the title assumed by Captain Firebrand," said the boy, pointing at the letters, "but I've destroyed her now."

"She vhas up by der top alretty vonet," said Fritz, pointing.

"Then we will go by the same way," said Jack, raising the boat.

When they got to the surface they saw the phantom ship rolling helplessly on her side, her hull shattered and ready to sink, while a number of Chinese and Japanese were setting a quarter boat afloat.

There were a dozen of them, and they had Captain Firebrand in their midst as they left the sinking vessel and rowed away.

The catamaran came to a pause upon the surface, and Jack flung open a window and shouted sternly:

"Haul to, on your lives, there!"

"Give way!" hissed Captain Firebrand, doggedly, in Chinese. The Mongolians obeyed him, and the boat shot along.

A frown mantled Jack's brow.

He drew a bead upon the hull of the boat, very carefully, with one of his electric pistols, and pulled the trigger.

The ball sped true to its mark and burst against the hull of the boat, blowing a big hole in it.

Instantly it filled with water and sank to the gunwales, leaving the crew swimming upon the surface.

"Maledictions upon you!" he heard Captain Firebrand roar.

"You had better surrender!" said Jack. "You are at our mercy!"

"Take me aboard!" growled the man.

Jack ran the catamaran over among them, and not only Captain Firebrand, but all his crew clambered up on deck, their bare feet greatly facilitating their action.

No sooner were they safe out of the yellow water, though, when Captain Firebrand addressed his men in their native language, when they made a rush for the doors and windows.

It became very evident that they intended to try to gain control of the Mermaid, but Jack easily frustrated this design.

Turning lever No. 5 on the switchboard, he sent a current of electricity into the metal hull, and as the men wore no shoes they received the shock and began to yell and jump.

In a moment the boy had them all rendered helpless again.

"Fool!" cried Jack. "Did you imagine you could get the best of me?"

"Stop it!" screamed Captain Firebrand, in agony. "You are torturing us! Oh, I cannot stand this much longer!"

"Tim, shackle him!" said Jack to the old sailor.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Fritz, you secure a couple of his men as witnesses."

"Yah!"

They both had on rubber-soled shoes, and going out on deck they took possession of Captain Firebrand and two of his men.

Upon seeing this the rest became scared and leaped into the sea.

Our friends were not sorry for this, as they were glad to get rid of them.

The unfortunate rascals swam to the fast-sinking wreck of the Flying Yankee and clambered upon it, while Captain Firebrand and his two companions were brought inside, and Jack shut off the current of electricity from the hulls.

Just then the boy descried a huge ship bearing down upon

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